US troops kill 54 Iraqis, many believed to be civilians

Story, Inday, Col. 2

Son of Estrada pal survives kidnap try

By Julie S. Alipala
PDI Mindanao Bureau

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Unidentified men shot and killed a bodyguard of a son of businessman Lepeng Wee, a close friend of deposed President Joseph Estrada's, during an alleged kidnapping attempt here early Sunday.

Police said that Richie Wee, 19, son of Robbie

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Meralco to collect ₱2B from rate hike

Gov't grants Lopez firm 12¢ increase per kWh

By Ramon W. Dominguez

STARTING January most four million consumers of Manila Electric Co. will have to cough up an additional 12 centavos per kilowatt-hour, which will allow the country's largest power distributor to gain some P2 billion more next year.

Meralco said the rate increase would enable it to raise its return-on-rate base (RORB), a measure of profitability, to 10.3 percent next year from an earlier projection of seven percent. Meralco's creditors want the firm to make a minimum RORB of eight percent.

Shares of Meralco jumped on news of the rate increase. In Ashdow, open to local investors, ended yesterday 2.56 percent at 75 centavos higher at P30.375, while its B shares, open to all, climbed 4.6 percent or P1 to P22.375.

Senate President Franklin Drilon described as mild to note the rate increase.

"This development is most timed since because of the additional burden that it imposes upon the consumers," said Drilon at a press conference.

A militant group slammed the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) for the increase, saying the "hastily approved rate hike" would burden the consumers.

Renato Reyes Jr., spokesperson of the Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan), condemned the decision as "unjust."

"The rate increase is bad for the consumers, bad for business, bad for the economy as a whole. The only beneficiary of this increase is Meralco and perhaps the national government which will receive a hefty amount of taxes from the distribution utility," Reyes said.

He said the rate increase would result in a whopping P12.7 billion in additional profits for Meralco next year.

"This number is already based on a

PEACEFUL FLIGHT
President Macapagal, Rep. Prospero Nograles, Korean Ambassador Sung Sang Hoanam & Transportation Office chief Vela release doves during the inauguration of the new Davao International Airport in Davao City. PDI/Boy Cruz Arnaldo

FPJ won't submit to selection process

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Christine O. Avendaño

MANILA actor Fernando Poe Jr. will seek the presidency in May, with or without the blessing of the main opposition party.

"FPJ is not a member of the LDP (Laban ng Demokratikong Pilipino) or any other political party," said Manny Pertes, chair of the Freedom, Peace and Justice (FPJ) Movement. "So he is not governed by their rules."

Should the LDP choose Sen. Panfilo Lacson, a party member, as standard-bearer, Poe will still run for president, Pertes said.

Asked for comment, Senate Minority Leader Vicente Sotto III said: "I'm not saying anything that is detrimental to the party."

Sotto, Poe's campaign manager, issued this statement in front of Pertes, who met with him in the Senate late yesterday afternoon.

Sotto said it would be better for Pertes to do the talking, as he refused to speculate whether the movie actor would go it alone if the LDP supported Lacson.

But Pertes said Poe would run for president, "no matter what."

Poe was a "candidate of the Filipino people, that is why there were no politicians when he made his announcement to run for president in 2004 last Wednesday," he emphasized.

Pertes maintained that the LDP selection process was a "private initiative."

Pertes distanced the FPJ Movement from the quagmire in which the LDP has found itself. The party leadership is locked in an intense dispute over the choice of its standard bearer.

Lacson had already agreed to a one-on-one meeting with Poe on Dec. 3, but as of yesterday, the actor was still undecided.

Sotto said he had already informed

Noli, Loren lead race for veep, poll shows

By Dona Pazz Bagas

SEN. Noli de Castro leads the vice presidential race, with fellow ABS-CBN host Sen. Loren Legarda and other possible candidates trailing far behind, an independent pollster said.

Pulse Asia Inc. based its finding on the results of a nationwide survey it conducted from Nov. 4-17.

In the senatorial race, Pulse Asia said most reelectionist senators, except Sen. Teresa Aquino-Oreta, were likely to retain their seat.

Only three of the administration candidates named to the Video Regulatory Board—chief Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr., Trade Secretary Manuel "Mar" Roxas II and Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon—made it to the "Magic 12," according to Pulse Asia.

Of the 1,200 adult respondents asked to choose from a list of 12 possible vice presidential candidates, 37 percent picked de Castro while 22 percent went for Legarda. The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

Senate President Franklin Drilon got 8 percent; Sen. Juan Flavier, 7 percent;

Peso rallies amid political uncertainties

By Clarissa S. Batino
Business

AFTER slumping to historic lows in two previous trading sessions, the peso yesterday shot up to 55.52 to the US dollar despite persistent worries about local political developments.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said he saw the peso firming to about 55 per dollar this month due to dollar import payments, rising export receipts, and huge dollar remittances from overseas Filipino workers this Christmas season.

Even so, technical analysts said the peso's steady decline had taken it to uncharted territory where it had few supports and plenty of scope to sink further.

At the Philippine Dealing System on Monday, the peso opened at 55.70 to the dollar, slid for a while to 55.75, rallied to P55.47, then closed at 55.52.

Defensor: GMA's new 'guy-to-ask'

By Juliet L. Javellana

PRESIDENT Macapagal Arroyo's new campaign spokesperson fired off his first salvo yesterday, but it was aimed at an unlikely target: not the opposition, but the administration party spokesperson.

Housing Secretary Michael Defensor, presented recently as the President's official political and campaign spokesperson, said Lakas-CMD spokesperson Feliciano Alonzo, a

US troops repel attacks, kill 54 Iraqis

BAGHDAD—Fifty-four Iraqis were killed in the northern city of Samarra on Sunday when US forces used battle tanks and armored to fight their way out of two simultaneous ambushes, the military said Monday.

But local residents said troops fired randomly at townspeople, and that most of those who died were civilians caught up in the clash.

The battle on Sunday—the bloodiest incident since May 1 when the war was declared over following the ouster of Saddam Hussein's regime—came after a weekend of violence that claimed the lives of seven Spanish intelligence agents, two South Korean contractors, two Japanese diplomats and their Iraqi driver, a Colombian contractor and two US soldiers.

The bloodshed—and grisly photographs showing Iraqis kicking the corpses of the dead Spanish agents—fueled debate in countries allied to Washington over the US-led occupation of Iraq.

SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS
Barangay Caridad Ilaya, Mandaue on Aguinaldo Street in Barangay Zapiga, Mandaue City, has become the main attraction in the community. Glenn Relativo

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: The whole country will experience partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers or thunderstorms. Partially to strong winds coming from the south and southeast will prevail over Northern and Central Luzon.

PNP revamp starts

By Christian V. Esguerra

THE MUCH-AWAITED top-to-bottom revamp at the Philippine National Police was finally implemented yesterday in the face of a resurgent crime wave that had the public doubting the police's ability to fight crime.

But more than fighting crime, PNP observers were convinced the revamp was intended to put an end to months of intense infighting for choice positions by persons close to Malacañang.

Deputy Director General Reynaldo Velasco, one of only three three-star police generals, was moved out of the PNP and appointed chief of the Philippine Center for Transnational Crime (PCTC).

Velasco, a former contender for PNP chief himself, had been reassigned to become his top security officer when Director Ricardo de Leon, another officer in charge of the crucial directorial staff.

Velasco was "thrown" to the PCTC after his alleged backer, former executive secretary Ronaldo de Villa, withdrew his support from President Macapagal-Arroyo and threw in behind her political opponents, former Sen. Raul Roco, a top PNP official told the Inquirer.

Replacing De Leon in an acting capacity is Director Enrique Galang, the President's anti-lesion (protest) master who is considered by many to be the "dark horse" among the candidates in second PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane Jr.

As the chief of the directorial staff (TCDS), Galang is the fourth-ranking official at the PNP.

"His appointment to TCDS is very strategic for him," noted another ranking PNP officer. "It appears he is being positioned to be the next PNP chief."

Chief Supt. Reynaldo Berroya, whose term had been extended by the President for one year, was replaced by Chief Supt. Alfredo de Dios Jr. as chief of the civil security group. Berroya is reportedly being groomed to be the next Bureau of Customs commissioner.

Director Robert Delfin was returned to his old post as chief of the directorate for intelligence, replacing Chief Supt. Arturo Lomibao who was transferred to the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG).

Lomibao replaced Director Eduardo Matillano at the CIDG, while the latter was promoted to chief of the Directorate for Investigation and Detection Management (DIDM).

Only two of the five police districts in Metro Manila were affected by the revamp.

Chief Supt. Rolando Sacramento, who was sodelibed by the President earlier for failing to stem illegal gambling in his jurisdiction, was replaced as Eastern Police District chief by Chief Supt. Oscar Inderenada. Sacramento was named chief of the Police Security and Protection Office (PSPO).

Chief Supt. Jose Gudmalin, erstwhile Southern Police District director, was appointed chief of finance service. Chief Supt. Prospero Noble, former PSPO chief, is the new SPO director.

In a statement, Ebdane said he would not hesitate to "throw the book at police commanders who will be remiss in their duty to prevent heinous crimes in their areas of responsibility."

The new members of the directorial staff are Chief Supt. Marcelo Navarro Jr. (human resource and doctrine development), Chief Supt. Victor Lupa (police community relations) and Director Avelino Razon (operations).

Director Rolando Enrico is the new chief of Region 7, Chief Supt. Georgie Rilles of Region 6, Chief Supt. Reynaldo Abella, Region 8-A, Chief Supt. Servando Ilyon, Region 9, Chief Rowland Albano, Cordillera Autonomous Region; Chief Supt. Jacinto Reyes, Region 10, and Chief Supt. Jaime Caringal, Region 12.

Chief Supt. Jesus Verzosa, another subordinate in Intelligence Group chief Ebdane, also succeeds Father Eduardo al-Ghazi as escaped from Camp Crame in July, was appointed Muslim's deputy at the DIDM.

The rest of the new appointees were Chief Supt. Antonio Villones (deputy NCRPO chief), Chief Supt. Ricardo Quezon Bagtasco (support services), Chief Supt. Marcelo De Jesus (civil service), Senior Supt. Ricardo Rapsa (maritime group), Senior Supt. Leopoldo Bunuan (police community relations group), and Senior Supt. Augusto Augustus Jr. (deputy chief of the directorate for research development).

Senior Supt. Geary Barias is the new chief of headquarters support service, Senior Supt. Ismael Salaman of the intelligence group, Senior Supt. Alberto Maestir Jr. special actions force; Senior Supt. Alex Diel Bonnaagada, firearms and explosives division, and Senior Supt. Joel Goltiao, public information office.

Troop movement 'a false alarm' but Palace ready

By TJ Burgonio, Juliet L. Javellana and Christian Esguerra

IT WAS a long way from April Fools' Day, but Malacañang seemed to have been taken in again.

The Presidential Security Group jacked up performance security at the Palace grounds last Sunday afternoon after an "unusual movement" of eight truckloads of uniformed Army men from Cavite to Makati City set off fresh rumors of a military coup.

But it turned out that the 120 Army engineers in the trucks were fresh recruits returning to their units in the Bautista Scout Station in Fort Bonifacio after training at the Master Training Base in Armour, Cavite.

"I think that was a false alarm," said Lt. Col. Emmet Lucero, military chief information officer of the Armed Forces of the Philippines general headquarters informed Malacañang that it was "no outbreak, sanctioned and approved movement."

Rumors of a re-run of the failed July 27 mutiny spread like wildfire following the sighting of the trucks rumbling down Villamor Air Base in Pasay City at around 5:40 p.m.

A civilian alerted Malacañang by mobile phone, prompting the PSG to declare a red alert and deploy three armored personnel carriers (APC) at the Palace main gate. This was a precautionary measure against any "unwanted incident," according to a PSG official who requested anonymity.

Four days over 300 disgruntled officers and men arrested a total in Makati City more than four months ago, the public has been suspicious of troop movements in Metro Manila.

Lucero said the military was currently drawing up measures to prevent future troop movements from creating "undue alarm." He did not give specifics. He also denied reports of storming RPC.

He noted that the military remained on white alert, the lowest level, and was in fact pulling out two platoons deployed at the premises of five TV stations, owing to the "long spirited all-peace" in the metropolis. The troops would instead be "utilized... to beef up our counter-kidnapping task force," he told reporters.

The soldiers, posted at the TV stations after the military uncovered evidence that the July mutineers were planning to take over ABS-CBN and ABS-CBN, would be placed under the the Integrated Capital Region Command, Lucero said.

Revived last month, the NCRC is tasked to counter threats posed by terror groups, communist insurgents and coup plotters. It has been set up in the wake of the summer's bomb and kidnapping delve.

Also widely circulated on Sunday evening were text messages about coup movements elsewhere, including one purportedly from members in Mindanao, and another in northern Luzon. Although they did not officially raise their alert levels, both the Philippine National Police and the AFP ordered verification of the reports.

"They were all rumors," Lieutenant Eduardo Matillano, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, said yesterday. "What's happening every day is a coup is wishing all these text messages."

Chief Supt. Nidal Querol, Region 5 police director, said there was "no massive movement of highpoliticking" possibly involving enemies of the Macapagal administration. But he said it could also be the work of people who had nothing better to do.

"Whoever are behind all these coup rumors are just trying to intimidate the government," he told the Inquirer. "They know very well that if) the government is distracted, they have one part of the battle."

Military intelligence units, one source told the Inquirer, were checking reports that groups and personalities identified with the political opposition were behind the so-called destabilization efforts. These people could be cop to touching "chaotic," he said.

Malacañang, President Macapagal-Arroyo downplayed Sunday's incident, and said that the PSG's "preemptive measures" had thrown the armed forces' readiness to deal with any crisis.

"We never remain calm and undisturbed by these rumors, as well as by the heated political controversies being thrown about by partisan quarters," she said.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye reported that the military at the Palace grounds was immediately ordered down as soon as the report was "confirmed as false."

GMA allays fears of rigged polls in May

By Gil Cabacungan Jr., Martin Murill and Christine Avendaño

WITH computerized elections nationwide virtually impossible at this time, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday moved to assuage mounting fears by her political rivals of massive cheating in next year's presidential elections.

The Commission on Elections is pushing for the computerized counting of ballots nationwide instead of limiting the automation to selected areas as recommended by Congress in a joint resolution.

Comelec boss Benjamin Abalos said the resolution which will limit the automated counting of votes to only 35 areas of the country.

But Sen. Edgardo Angara fears selective automation means there were not enough machines to computerize the canvass of votes nationwide and that Malacañang's intervention in a broader implementation was applied to massive cheating.

Angara said the Comelec "is defying the will of Congress" with its bid to hold a nationwide automated counting instead of Congress' recommendation for selective automation.

There are 1,614 cities and municipalities in the country while Comelec has 1,397 counting machines and Pilipino machines which can be deployed in more densely populated areas. The Comelec said there will be one counting machine per 30,000 to 50,000 voters.

Comelec Chief Benjamin Abalos said the Electoral Commission decided on selective automation on the belief that the physical transfer of secured ballots in the city or municipality counting centers was "too risky" and could be an opportunity for hijacking, ballot switching and other attempts at cheating by "desperate candidates."

The Senate fears that the polls will be rigged, Mr Macapagal's secretary agreed to consult even her political rivals in deciding how to go about the computerization of next year's elections.

"Let us not allow misleading or inconsistencies that undermine automation programs. This is vital to national stability and progress and I ask for a commitment of all parties and political leaders in this regard," Mr. Macapagal said in a statement.

The President said the automation of poll services in May 2004 was a "fundamental democratic reform." "Let us make a final move to refurn greater credibility to the polls and greater faith in democracy," the President said.

Lacuna that the 2004 elections would be marred by cheating, vote-buying and violence were further heightened by presidential aspirant Fred Lacuna's declaration that he would "lead a charge to Malacañang if the administration would cheat to ensure victory at the polls.

In an "Open letter to the Filipino people", Abalos yesterday tried to explain why it flip-flopped on the automation of the 2004 elections.

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Gov't will go after JI, MILF warned

GMA: We'll fight terrorists even if it meant scuttling peace talks

By GIC Cabacungan Jr. and TJ Burgonio

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday said the government would continue to go after terrorists even if it meant scuttling the peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.

"The government will not allow the peace process to stand in the way of the overriding fight against terrorism," Mr Macapagal said in a statement.

The MILF Defense Secretary Eduardo Ermita said the other day, continued to support regional terror group Jemaah Islamiyah's enlisting regime in Mindanao.

But the MILF yesterday accused Ermita of trying to derail the peace talks by rehashing the "old issue" of the JI training camps.

"Ermita's statement is provocative. It hinders rather than helps our efforts to achieve comprehensive peace. It is a violation of the ceasefire agreement," said Rai Edmin, MILF spokesperson, in a phone interview.

Ermita had said MILF members were training with JI operatives in two camps in Lanao del Sur and Lanao del Norte.

The camps, where Indonesian JI members were reportedly hosting their bomb-making skills, are believed to be in MILF territory.

"I have directed the government peace panel to bring this matter to the attention of the MILF so the people he can. We have asked the MILF to purge itself of terrorists and we have a standing commitment from the MILF to do so," the President's statement said.

Negotiations toward a final peace agreement between the government and the MILF were supposed to have started six months ago but concerns about the terrorist group's links to international terrorist organizations have stalled the talks set in Malaysia.

Edmin said that he has reassurances. Enemy are sending mixed signals to the military, which had stopped its operations against the MILF following a mutual ceasefire agreement in June.

"They're creating concerns of doubts on the sincerity of the MILF in the peace talks," Edmin said.

He said the government should probe the alleged training of JI operatives instead of speaking at length about the "recycled issue."

"They should have investigated this, instead of making irresponsible statements without any basis," Edmin said, reiterating that the MILF camps were open to any investigation.

A seven-man observer party from Malaysia is due to arrive in Mindanao to monitor the conduct of the ceasefire, which is one of the prerequisites for the resumption of the peace talks in Kuala Lumpur.

Edmin said Ermita's statement was aimed at covering up the government's failure to comply with agreements made during exploratory peace talks with the MILF earlier this year, such as the pullout of troops from the Buliok complex.

"That's the reason the peace talks have been put off a lot of times," he said.

Edmin said Ermita's statement was also aimed at exerting public pressure on Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago, whose three bus bave an upsurge in heinous crimes and coup talk.

"This is a diversionary tactic meant to shift attention away from Metro Manila," he said.

Take HIV test for love, DOH urges OFWs

By Marielle S. Nieves

"If you really love me ..."

The Department of Health yesterday urged spouses, girlfriends and boyfriends of returning overseas Filipino workers to ask their partners to take an HIV test before resuming sexual activity.

Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit noted that OFWs continued to be the main transmitters of the human immunodeficiency virus, accounting for a third of all registered cases in the country.

Official figures show 1,920 HIV infections since 1984, with only 624 resulting in full-blown AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

A "Consensus Report" by the World Health Organization Western Pacific and the DOH, available on the WHO website, estimates the actual number of HIV infections at just over 8,000 as of 2001, 24 percent of them coming from OFWs.

The Philippine National AIDS Council noted a 12 percent increase in the HIV cases among OFWs—from 28 percent of the total number in 2000 to 32 percent this year.

Dayrit cited the cases in Angeles, Pampanga, where the women were found to have been infected by their OFW husbands.

AIDS could easily spread to the country through Filipino workers who have had "sidis sex behavior" abroad, the health chief warned during a press briefing yesterday in celebration of World AIDS day.

Dayrit said the DOH was appealing to the spouses and partners because the government could not force the returning workers to submit to testing. "Confidentiality will be maintained," he assured those who would go voluntarily. "And if found positive, they will get help," With AP report

GMA orders agriculture dep't to move head office to Mindanao

By Jaime Laude Lapeña

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday ordered the Department of Agriculture to relocate its head office to Mindanao in a bid to transform the island into the country's food basket.

"We need to maximize Mindanao as the food basket. Agricultural modernization and agricultural policies must emanate from Mindanao, not Manila," the President said in a speech at the opening of Davao International Airport.

"That is why this morning, I instructed [Agriculture] Secretary Gil Luersen that the Department of Agriculture shall transfer to Mindanao." Mr Macapagal said in Ayala-ese reference to the departure lounge of the mail-order airport.

The new airport in Davao, the country's second largest city, has a capacity of 1.2 million passengers and 83,000 tons of cargo a year and can service upto 18 planes every hour.

Mr Macapagal said Luersen would hold office in Mindanao, while two DA undersecretaries for Luzon and the Visayas would stay in Manila.

"Food is every table," she said, "it urges Mindanao would bring in the entire country."

"That is what Davao International Airport will give...more power for Mindanao to be the center in our country," she said.

Mr Macapagal said Luersen was "very enthusiastic" about the transfer and would contact backbone in program for it soon.

But with only five months left before the May 2004 presidential elections, Malacañang could not explain why the decision to transfer DA is only being made now.

Presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said the idea of transferring the DA to Mindanao had been considered for quite some time.

The November survey of Pulse Asia Inc. showed that Mindanaoans would only vote for Mr Macapagal if she was not running against actor-star Fernando Poe Jr. who, the polling firm said, is the heavy favorite of Mindanao.

Thus, the President took advantage of the occasion to court Mindanaoan votes, saying she came to the inauguration even if she was "running a very bad cold."

"That's why even if I am running a very bad cold, I could not help but be here with all of you," she said.

"I had been with you in your dreams from the beginning and we must always be together to work to make the dreams come true because our ultimate dream is that Mindanao will be able to be united and victorious over the problems of poverty and Mindanao will truly be the food basket, tourist destination and the agro-industrial center that will bring about prosperity and self-sufficiency and a winner in the battle against hunger for the entire people of the Philippines," she said. With AP report

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo with Davao International Airport's acting Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza and Davao City Mayor Rodrigo Duterte Monday.

More Pinays leaving due to 'bleak outlook'

By Marie P. Hadji

MIGRANT groups yesterday predicted that more Filipinas would go abroad, most of them to Japan, because of the "bleak outlook for Philippine economy and society getting more gloomy."

"We foresee an increase in the next few years in the number of Filipina women fleeing to Japan in search of a better life for themselves and their families," the Batis Center for Migrant said in a paper read yesterday during a forum on ways to end violence against women.

According to government data taken in 2002 and presented in the forum, out of 288,333 "new hires" for overseas jobs, 238,833—or 73 percent—were women.

The figure for women workers going to Japan was much higher. Out of 77,878 overseas workers who were there, 73,499 were deployed as entertainers, 81 percent of whom were women.

Batis Center migrant group, Kanlungan, said that Filipina women were deployed as sales executives, mostly as domestic workers, nurses and entertainers.

The migrant groups said the economy problem has a big risk of being abused sexually, physically, psychologically and verbally.

"If we do not seriously find solutions to the problems faced by entertainers in Japan, many of these women with some homes are with their dreams shattered," Batis said in a paper.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, December 2, 2003
1st Week of Advent

1st Reading: Is 11:1-10
Gospel: Lk 10:21-24

Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit and said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and made them known to the little ones. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. I have been given all things by my Father, so that no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and he to whom the Son chooses to revel[ation]."

Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said exclusively to them, "Happy are you to see what you see. For I tell you that many prophets and kings would have liked to see what you see but did not, and to hear what you hear but did not hear."

Commentary:

Jesus gives praise and thanksgiving to the Father. The Word of Jesus and life of the Father is proclaimed mostly to lowly and affirmation. Jesus of Jesus is the Savior and likewise the Father affirms Jesus. His mutual love and affirmation between Jesus and His Father is echoed in others in the act and deed and rejoiced. The good news of Jesus is the message of affirmation and love especially for the "little people," the children, the poor, the downtrodden and the outcasts. The little ones are the special recipients of the revelation of God because they are the ones that need God's love most.

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RP to sign UN anti-graft pact in Mexico

THE PHILIPPINES will sign the United Nations Convention against Corruption during a high-level political signing conference in Merida, Mexico, on Dec. 9-11, Foreign Secretary Blas Ople said yesterday.

"This agreement reflects our own values and embodies our aspirations. Like other countries, we are concerned about the enormous of the problems and chronic that grab and corruption pose to the stability and security of societies, and how they undermine the institutional and values of democracy," the secretary said.

Ople said the Philippine would also "move decisively" for the agreement's ratification.

A delegation to the conference headed by Justice Secretary Simeon Datumanong and Sen. Ralph Recto is set to attend the signing conference. The symposium has been slated with participants to sign the important and historic treaty," Ople said.

One of the country's major contributors in the formulation of the treaty, the foreign affairs chief said, was the provision that urged governments to return stolen assets to the countries that owned them.

"We are determined to more effectively prevent, detect and deter the international transfer of illicitly acquired assets, and strengthen international cooperation in asset recovery," he said.

Ople said the new treaty, together with such other accords as the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime reinforced law enforcement, "from a strict regime of international law that defines a serious blow to crime and corruption."

The Philippines also welcomed the 1965 declaration of Dec. 9 as International Anti-Corruption Day, according to the secretary.

Aside from Datumanong and Recto, the other members of the Philippine delegation are Ambassador to World Trade Orgs. Affairs Ambassador to Mexico Jaime Ongpin, Overall Deputy Ombudsman Margarita Gervasio, Presidential Anti-Graft Commission Chairman Dante Rania, Presidential Commission on Good Government Commissioner Ruben Carranza, Assistant Justice Secretary Ricardo Paras, Justice Oscar Garcia, colonel Amelita Aguino and lawyer Jordan Lumawig. Jerome Aning

GMA asks Congress to pass nat'l ID system law

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has asked Congress to immediately pass the National Identification System Act despite strong opposition from some groups.

National Security Adviser Roilo Golez said the proposed national ID system would help the Philippines combat terrorism and fraud.

The ID system would combat swindling, electoral fraud, and preventing a terrorist from getting into the country using false identity papers "and causing as much damage to our economy," Golez said on ABS-CBN television.

Golez said concerns that a national ID system would restrict civil liberties can be eased in barest government ethics were "worthless," saying those ethics were put forward by groups seeking to bring down the government. Changing the law of course.

However, it is not only militant groups that are up in arms against the proposed ID system which they claimed as "repressive."

Yesterday, former Sec. Raul Roco, a first candidate of Mr. Macapagal in the 2004 elections, said the proposed ID system would only victimize innocent Filipinos and give rise to massive corruption.

"The creation of a national ID system is a quick fix that would not deter terrorists and criminals, but instead would pose a threat to the rights, freedoms and liberties of Filipinos," Roco warned.

He noted that anybody he may become a criminals, will always be able to obtain, by legal or illegal means, the documents needed to get a government ID.

But Davao City Rep. Prospero Nograles defended the proposed ID system, saying this would help in the fight against crime and terrorism.

Nograles assured that Congress would put in place all the necessary safeguards to prevent abuse on every individual's basic human rights, including the right to privacy.

"There's no basis for the perceptions that the bills can be a tool for abuse," he said.

Nograles said that would not only provide the government a quicker access on the profile of suspected criminals and terrorists but this would also expedite business and government transactions.

The congressman cited countries that have a national reference system similar to the proposed NIS.

In Brunei, for example, all residents were obliged to carry at all times a laminated Smart-Me ID card bearing a photograph, thumbprint, full name and parents' names, national name and several numbers.

The German Inner "Personalausweis," a plastic ID card which contains the name, date and place of birth, nationality, date of expiration, signature and photo of the bearer.

The Italians have a larger ID format containing identity number, name, photo, signature, fingerprints, date and place of birth, citizenship, residency address, marital status, profession and physical characteristics.

The Department of Justice yesterday also hit critics of the national ID system, stating those only criminals and those who have something to hide from the laws are against it.

"Having a single national ID system would be for the convenience of the people. There are many countries who have national IDs," said Justice Undersecretary Jose Calida.

Militant groups have warned that the national ID system would violate the people's human rights and civil liberties.

They said they would go to the extent if the government proceeds with its plan to implement a national ID system.

In 1996, former President Fidel V. Ramos tried to push for a national ID system as part of the government's security and counter-insurgency measures. But it was shot down after the Supreme Court ruled that it posed a "clear and present danger" and would violate a person's right to privacy which is guaranteed and made "inviolable" by the Constitution. AP, Philip C. Tubeza and Cynthia D. Balana

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Son of Estrada pal . . .

(Story begs in)

kipping, reported Unit for and his other security escort, who was not identified, escaped in the gunmen fired at dessene facility in a tinted Mitsubishi with the.

But Supt. Mario Vargas, city police chief, said he was not convinced that it was a case of a failed kidnapping "because the two others were not harmed."

Vargas said Wee's group and the armed men could have figured in a new vehicular accident.

The three refused to talk to local journalists.

"We recovered 21 spent shells at the crime scene," Vargas said. The shells had came from a .45-cal. pistol, a 9-mm pistol and an M-16 rifle, according to Chief Insp. Nicolas Salvador, chief of the Ilocos police office.

Salvador said Richie had claimed he was shooting along Marcos St. when Gerardo in Barangay San Mateo when he noticed two vehicles, a yellow Revo and a white multicab, coming there.

The vehicles reportedly blocked their way and their five passengers ordered the teenager to alight, Richie told police.

Ryanne, on, who got down from the vehicle, was shot by the gunmen. He died from seven bullet wounds, Vargas said.

Immediately after the killing, Richie said he was let go when guard escaped and reported the case to the police.

Richie's father had negotiated the release of three Malaysians who were among those kidnapped from Lingkabau resort in Semporna, Malaysia, in 2000.

US troops repel attacks, kill 54 Iraqis

(Coverage A1)

nights on the risks of getting involved in the volatile Iraqi stability and rebuild Iraq.

A U.S. military spokesperson said Sunday's clash was initiated by suicide-car, many wearing uniforms of Saddam's Fedayeen paramilitary force, who simultaneously attacked two U.S. convoys at opposite sides of Samarra, a town between Baghdad and Saddam's hometown of Tikrit.

Associated Press Television News images showed scenes of devastation, with buildings pockmarked by hundreds of bullet holes, and shoot-out-destroyed damaged cars, apparently one seen by armored vehicles. A bus abandoned in the middle of a street had its front shorted off. Rescue workers picked through destroyed buildings.

"The 4th Infantry Division expelled multiple ambush attacks," Lt. Col. William MacDonald told reporters.

MacDonald said that after barricading a road, the attackers opened fire from multiple and rifle-grenades with bombs, small arms, rockets and rocket-propelled grenades. Six troops responded with 120-mm tank rounds and 25-mm cannon fire from Bradley fighting vehicles.

Six fire-destroyed three buildings the attackers were using, MacDonald said.

"It sounds like the attacked some coordination to it, but the soldiers responded, used their firepower, used tank and Bradley fire and other weapons available to them, to stop this attack and take the fight to the enemy," he said.

Largest attack

MacDonald said the attack was the largest faced by 1st Tank Brd. battalion, whose mission includes the hunt for Saddam. Military officials in Baghdad said they hadn't reported a deadliest attack since May 1, when US President George W. Bush declared major combat over.

The scale of the attack and the apparent coordination of the two operations showed that rebel units retain the ability to conduct synchronized operations despite a massive US offensive this month aimed at crushing the insurgency.

At least 106 soldiers have been killed in Iraq in Hostilities, including 79 since Mar. 1 and 10 before soldiers. In terms of combat losses, it has been the bloodiest month of the war that began on March 20.

In Sunday's firefight in Samarra, the US military initially said 40 Iraqi fighters died and 30 were wounded. Soldiers were wounded. Fighters Iraqis were also reported wounded and eight were captured.

But a US military statement on Monday raised the Iraqi dead to 54 amid reports by Iraqi doctors that eight civilians were killed by US fire in the battle in exchanges.

Samarra residents who said many of those killed were ordinary townspeople who tried to flee the firefight.

"No one wants these americans to enter this holy city. We don't want them in shrine life, and that's why this battle happened," said resident Khamis Hussein. "Many Iraqis were killed and many were captured. Iraq forces in their unequipment."

Ramzan Shaker, who had a shrapnel wound to his left arm, said a shell exploded among a group of workers walking out of the gate of the Samarra Thermoelectrical Plant at the end of the morning shift.

"American forces opened fire randomly on passersby and on (people) in the residential cities," said Shaker, who was interviewed on Monday at the town's general hospital.

Two rooms ripped by fire in Sunday's attack on a US Army convoy in Samarra.

Shortly after the firefight, four men in a BMW attacked another US convoy in Samarra with automatic rifles, MacDonald said. The attack occurred at 6:30 p.m. and injured Sgt. Ismael Rafael, whose rifle and grenade launchers in their car.

"We have been very aggressive in our convoy operations . . . It does send a clear message that if you attempt to attack one of our convoys, we're going to use our firepower to stop that attack," MacDonald said.

New campaign

Also Sunday, two South Korean translators were killed near Samarra in a roadside ambush in what US officials called a new campaign aimed at undermining international support for the US-led occupation of Iraq. Attacks on Saturday killed seven Spanish intelligence agents, two Japanese diplomats and a Colombian diplomat.

In Seoul, the South Korean government vowed Monday to stick by plans to send up to 3,000 troops to Iraq despite the killing of two South Koreans long hostage.

"This incident will not affect the question of sending troops to Iraq," Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan said Monday. "Our decision to send troops to Iraq remains unchanged."

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi reiterated Monday his vow that the attacks on the Japanese diplomats would not alter Tokyo's commitment to send non-combat troops, possibly by mid-January, for humanitarian aid and participate in the reconstruction of Iraq.

"The more we give in to terrorism," Koizumi said.

In Spain, the coffins of the slain intelligence agents arrived home on Sunday, a day after the men were killed when guerrillas attacked their convoy south of Baghdad with assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades.

The deaths sparked deep emotional doubts about the role of Spanish troops in Iraq, but Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar reiterated the support of public opinion to support the US invasion—and the country would not abandon its mission in Iraq. *Reports from AP and Reuters*

An Open Invitation to all

In celebration of the International Children's day—November 20, 2003, Youth Act 2003: Operation Day's Work, Philippines (Youth Act ODW) will kick off its campaign to support projects for the promotion on the rights of rural, indigenous, juvenile and terminally-ill children.

Come and join us in this celebration as we launch Youth Act ODW 2003 during the Social Development Week at the Gonzalo Activity Center, Makati City.

All-day flash presentation on the Rights of the Filipino Children
10:00 am – 6:00 pm

Youth Act ODW 2003 Launch
"Symbolical shopping of coins, bills or checks to Youth Act Coin Bank"
6:00 – 7:00 pm

Youth Act 2003 is a nationwide event of youth empowerment and service. Jointly organized by the National Youth Commission, Cartalmat Foundation, Children's Rights Network, Make-A-Wish Foundation and Gawad sa Kinabukasan, Inc. On 10 December 2003, thousands of high school and college students all over the country will be coming together to show the world that it's hip to serve! Youth Act is all about young people—working together while having fun to help those in need! For more inquiries, get in touch with the National Youth Act Secretariat @ the following contact details: 926-3053 & youthact@yahoo.com

Manay Gina eyes Senate seat

By Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

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DAGUPAN CITY—Don't look now, but Gina de Venecia, the wife of Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., may run for senator in the May national elections.

Mrs. De Venecia, 54, known as Manay Gina, said the leadership of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats was encouraging her to join the party's senatorial slate because a "seasoned somebody to represent the women and children in the Senate."

Will her husband allow her? "He's thinking about it. If it's good for the people and I can be of help, why won't he allow me?" she said.

The Speaker, who happens to be the co-chair of Lakas, smiled and put his hands up when asked about the candidacy of his wife. "Is she keen on running?" he asked.

Mrs. De Venecia said she would also be counting on the support of the women she has helped, her fans, her friends in the music industry and the Lakas machinery.

She is the president of the Congressional Spouses Foundation Inc., which has established shelters for abused women and children. The group has also established shelters for street children in different parts of the country.

Mrs. De Venecia said she would be counting on the support of members of the movie industry, "which is part of my family." The Star Pictures family owns Sampaguita Pictures, which made movie stars like Susan Roces, Rosemarie Sonora and Rosalia Fuentes.

Mrs. De Venecia is the younger sister of Marichu Vera Perez, former wife of former Int. Exec. Rhoda.

She admitted that she had no experience in politics, but her background in public service and politics would be enough.

She said her father, known as Doc Perez, had inculcated in his children the value of helping the poor.

Being married to the Speaker got her involved in politics, she said. Whatever political lessons she has not learned, she said, "he can teach me."

Mrs. De Venecia, who wants her room to hold and balance and relieve husband to from vote-rich Pangasinan, said she would announce her decision on Jan. 1.

Noli, Loren lead VP race, poll shows

Pronouncement

percent; Sen. Juan Flavier, 7 percent; Sen. Vicente Sotto III, 6 percent, and Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando, 5 percent.

Senators Rodolfo Barbers, Aquilino "Nene" Pimentel Jr. and Ramon Magsaysay Jr. each got 3 percent. Vice President Teofisto Guingona Jr. and Sotto, 2 percent, and former Cebu Gov. Emilio "Lito" Osmeña, one percent.

Only one percent of the respondents were undecided.

"While Filipinos give strong support to De Castro for both the presidential and vice presidential positions, he stands a better chance in the VP race where he takes the lead even as he has not announced that he will indeed run for it," Pulse Asia executive director Ana Maria Tabunda said in a statement.

Pulse Asia said that De Castro's strongest support came from the poorest Class E (47 percent) and that he was relatively weak among Metro Manilans (29 percent) and the upper Classes ABC (21 percent).

In contrast, Legarda had a good showing among Metro Manilans (30 percent) but was weak among the Class E (16 percent).

De Castro is being teased by President Macapagal-Arroyo to be her running mate, although he has not declared an interest in the post.

Legarda said she was running for the second top post when she joined the administration party. She is reportedly being considered by Arroyo-Fernando for Jr. to be his running mate.

Barbers and Fernando have also declared their interest in the vice presidency.

"While De Castro tends to be picked as the first-choice candidate in the VP race, Legarda gets most of the second-choice votes," Tabunda noted.

Twenty-six percent of the respondents said they would vote for Legarda if their first choice would not win; 19 percent would go for De Castro; 10 percent for Sotto; 9 percent for Flavier, and 7 percent for Defen.

Korina Sanchez

Out of 37 pre-selected personalities, the respondents were asked to name the 12 they would vote for for senator. Eighteen got at least 23 percent of the votes, enough to be within striking distance of the "Magic 12."

Legarda ranked first with 66.2 percent, followed by former Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, 48.2 percent; Revilla Jr., 36.5 percent; Pimentel, 34.1 percent; Sen. Rodolfo Biazon, 34.2 percent; former Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim, 33.6 percent; Barbers, 32.8 percent; Foreign Secretary Blas Ople, 30.2 percent; ABS-CBN news reader Korina Sanchez, 29.3 percent; Sen. Robert Jaworski, 27.8 percent.

Congress, 27.1 percent; Gov. John Osmeña, 26.8 percent; former Sen. Mayor Jinggoy Estrada, 26.4 percent; Roxas, 26.2 percent; Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos, 25.2 percent; former Gov. Juan Ponce Enrile, 24.7 percent; former Sen. Orlando Mercado, 24.2 percent, and Cardoz, 23.8 percent.

The WORLD

Editor Lenorne B. Guaco

Seoul, Tokyo undeterred by Iraq deaths

TOKYO/SEOUL—Japan and South Korea voiced determination on Monday to proceed with sending troops to Iraq despite weekend killings of several of their nationals there and popular doubts about taking part in the operation.

Neither of the two North Asian nations plans to send large numbers of soldiers or to take part in combat operations, but their participation marks an important step for the US-led coalition forces in persuading more countries to join.

Two Japanese diplomats were killed in an ambush on Saturday en route to a reconstruction conference in the northern town of Tikrit while two South Korean electrical workers died in a shooting shortly after the city that is the hometown of deposed president Saddam Hussein.

They were among a dozen people from four US-allied nations killed in weekend attacks, sparking new concern among Washington's allies about the risks of getting involved in Iraq.

"There is no change in our stance," said Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, reelected last month but who must balance the demands of security ties with the United States with the concerns of most Indian Upper House elections in July.

"We must not be daunted by the intentions of terrorists to halt the reconstruction effort and cause confusion," he said.

He gave no clue as to when troops might be sent.

South Korea would go ahead with plans to deploy more troops to Iraq despite the shooting of four South Korean civilians on Sunday, Foreign Minister Yoon Young-kwan told a briefing.

"The issue of the troop deployment plan is for myself and his officials and there is no change to our original plan," said Yoon, who is a member of South Korea's National Security Council and attended an emergency session earlier.

He said it was still not clear whether the South Koreans victims—two killed and two wounded—had been specifically targeted because of Seoul's support for the US-led forces in Iraq.

"Despite the tragic incident, we will not yield to violence or killings," the foreign ministry said. "We will continue to participate in humanitarian aid to Iraq and reconstruction efforts."

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun condemned the shootings.

Reuters

1 AIDS death every minute in Asia—WHO

MANILA—AIDS now kills a person every minute in the Asia Pacific, the World Health Organization said Monday, warning HIV prevalence is increasing in China, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Vietnam.

The Manila-based WHO regional office for the Western Pacific said in a statement in conjunction with World AIDS Day that more than half a million people in the Asia Pacific died of the disease in 2003.

"That is one death from AIDS every minute," it said, warning that "without major investments in prevention and care, similar annual death tolls can be expected until the end of the decade."

New WHO studies showed that more than seven million people were living with HIV/AIDS in Asia and the Pacific, out of the global total of 40 million.

India had the highest number of people in Asia living with HIV/AIDS—an estimated 3.8 million to 6.6 million people. AFP

CLASSICAL DANCE

Indian dancers practice the ancient Odissi dance during the Konark Dance Festival, 19 km from the city of Bhubaneshwar, capital of the eastern Indian state of Orissa on Dec. 1. The five-day festival invites many different types of classical dancers from across India to perform traditional dances. AFP

US to release 140 prisoners from Guantanamo

WASHINGTON—The United States has plans to release scores of prisoners at its Guantanamo Bay naval base in Cuba for al-Qaida and Taliban detainees, according to reports Sunday.

A US military officials told Time magazine that it would release 140 inmates from its detention center in Cuba, in the face of mounting international criticism of the legal limbo that has left them without access to legal representation.

A US military official told the magazine that the detainees slated for release are "the easiest 10 percent" of the estimated 660 people kept at the Guantanamo Bay facility, which the United States has leased from Cuba since 1903.

US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that some of the detainees had been captured by Afghan warlords and sold for the bounty offered by Washington for al-Qaida and Taliban fighters.

"Many would never have been detained under the normal rules of engagement," the source told the weekly.

"We're dealing with some very, very dangerous people, but the president is swinging sooner in the wrong direction."

Twenty prisoners were released and repatriated on June 11, but another 20 arrived around the same time, leaving the total number of inmates unchanged.

AFP

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MESSAGES

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PROGRAMME at a GLANCE

1 DECEMBER 2003 (Wednesday)

4 DECEMBER 2003 (Thursday)

5 DECEMBER 2003 (Friday)

6 DECEMBER 2003 (Saturday)

Private Mideast peace effort to be launched

GENEVA—Prominent Palestinians and Israeli opposition politicians plan to launch a private Middle East peace effort dubbed the Geneva Initiative on Monday, drawing powerful opposition at their fair.

The initiative contains a detailed blueprint to resolve some of the toughest issues in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but has met outright rejection from the Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and half-hearted support from the Palestinian leadership.

It is being formally unveiled in the numerous Swiss city as the latest nationwide Israeli "roadmap" for peace has floundered amid continuing violence and Israel's building of a security barrier through the occupied West Bank.

The Israeli government has sharply criticized the instigators for bypassing official channels and has reiterated that the bid will harm their readiness.

Israel warned the international community not to be roused into supporting the initiative, which has no official backing although it has drawn European support and encouragement from Washington.

Washington's top envoy, William Burns met senior Israeli officials Tuesday, amid a sudden flurry of diplomatic activity.

The Geneva initiative's creators aims to the unfeasible right of return of 3.8 million Palestinian refugees has caused it remarkable position from Palestinian factions.

On Tuesday, about 300 militants from an umbrella group representing Palestinian factions, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Palestinian president Yasser Arafat's counterterrorism Fatah party, blocked a Palestinian delegation heading to Geneva from the Erez Gaza.

The principal architects of the Geneva blueprint include former Israeli justice minister Yossi Beilin and ex-Palestinian information minister and Arafat confidant Yasser Abed Rabbo, who say it is unpalatable to the official leadership.

Their 50-page document details the creation of a Palestinian state encompassing 97.5 percent of the West Bank with shared sovereignty over Jerusalem.

The launch of the bid in Geneva is due to be attended by about 500 guests, including many intellectuals and celebrities from both sides of the divide, as well as former US President Jimmy Carter, who helped broker the Camp David accords that led to the 1979 peace treaty between Israel and Egypt. AFP

ENGLISH CHANNEL CROSSER
Swimmer Gertrude Ederle is pictured at a beach on Long Island, N.Y., in the 1923 file photo. Ederle, who was the first of American and European 1920s when she became the first woman to swim the English Channel, died Nov. 30. She was 97. —

Pakistan agrees to resume air connections with India

ISLAMABAD—Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf Tuesday said his country will agree to resume air links with India at Tuesday's coming talks in New Delhi, the latest sign of thawing relations between the nuclear rivals.

In a speech at a youth conference, Musharraf said Pakistan would make the agreement at the two-day talks as a gesture of goodwill at a time when both countries appear to be taking significant steps to reverse a major standoff.

"Pakistan is aware such a climate for peace in the region," Musharraf said, according to the state-run Associated Press of Pakistan.

"In the morning which is taking place tomorrow and day after in New Delhi, we will agree and our will resume all flights."

The move, which comes shortly after both countries declared a ceasefire along their border in the disputed region of Kashmir, was hailed by New Delhi, which has been pressing Islamabad to gain overflight rights to Afghanistan.

"We welcome the announcement by President Musharraf that Pakistan will agree to overflights," external affairs ministry spokesperson Nirupti Jaisoo said, according to a Press Trust of India report.

"We are looking forward to a successful outcome of the talks tomorrow (Monday) and the day after." Talks between civilian officials from Pakistan and India held in August in the Pakistani city of Rawalpindi ended inconclusively.

The two countries severed air links after a December 2001 attack on India's parliament blamed by New Delhi on Pakistan-backed Kashmir separatists. More than one million troops were deployed by both countries along their mutual border following the incident. AFP

Syria hands over to Turkey 22 bombing suspects

ADANA—Syria has handed over to Turkey 22 people suspected of involvement in deadly suicide attacks in Istanbul, Anatolian news agency reported on Sunday, a day after another suspect was charged with working to topple the state.

The suspects fled Turkey after the November bombings in which 61 people died, the state-run agency said, quoting a statement from the Judicial security services.

Arrest of those detained were believed to have links with Ayad Tilmet, who investigators suspect was a key planner of the attacks, the agency added. Bilmet is believed to have escaped from Turkey.

Turkey has so far charged 23 people on various counts in connection with the attacks on two Istanbul synagogues in which 25 people died on Nov. 15 and the offices of British-based bank HSBC and the British consulate in which 30 people died five days later.

Authorities Saturday charged an unnamed man with seeking to overthrow Turkey's constitutional order by force, which carries a life sentence on conviction. They accused him of ordering the bombing of the Beth Israel synagogue before saying he fled to Syria.

Police have named 29-year-old Hesin Cabuk as the man who actually blew himself up in carrying out the Beth Israel attack.

Istanbul's city governor Muammer Guler held a news conference in Istanbul on Sunday police had also identified a man they believed to be the suicide bomber in the attack on the HSBC bank building.

Guler said Turkish security services had not yet established whether Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida network was involved in the attacks.

A number of suspects had fled to Syria, with which Turkey has had turbulent diplomatic relations in recent years. Reuter

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Editor Cesar D. Hangarang

Land reclamation eats up portion of lake basin

LUZVIMIG devastation in Tayuman, Manila

By Jerry Esplanada

(First of two parts)

THE LAGUNA de Bay shoreland, with an estimated area of 34,000 hectares, has snowballed by nearly 100 hectares.

Thanks to Presidential Proclamation 704 and tons of both undelivered and fresh garbage and other filling materials, Laguna Avenida in Victoria, Rizal, has taken what used to be the lake's northwestern fringes and transformed it into what used to be swampy shorelines," and researchers of IPRI Training and Development Corp., one of the country's top construction, real estate and realty sector consultancies in Manila.

Despite Banaag, IPRI vice president, recalled that sometime in April 2003 Laguna Avenida residents requested for "low-grade compost and other filling materials" from the LLDA.

Several politicians and non-government groups had earlier promised to provide the flood-prone area with filling materials. "But nothing happened," said Rhein Mendelsberg, another IPRI researcher.

In a 2003 letter to IPRI, Avenida Urban Poor Federation president Avelino de los Reyes claimed for several months the area was submerged in water.

The Department of Public Works and Highways, for its part, affirmed that Taguig, among other flood-coastal towns, suffered the "most serious" damage from Typhoon Reming, which is brought about by flash low elevation and overflooding of rivers and drainage channels.

De los Reyes also cited needs of soil tests, purportedly conducted by a University of the Philippines environmental engineering team, which assessed "the low grade compost (from Marikina Mountain) is stable and safe."

Sometime in May 2003, permits were issued to IPRI by Jaime Bautista Jaime Esquerra and barangay Sta. Ana chair Victor Buenaventura.

But unlike De LIPPO, the LLDA is not happy with developments at Laguna Avenida which, it says, is illegal and "not for human habitation."

To date, the LLDA has yet to issue a clearance to any firm engaged in waste management activities in the area.

Dumping of garbage and other waste materials on reclaimed areas is strictly prohibited, assured LLDA general manager Calixto Catapat who called the issue "one of our problems."

Securing the territory was also impressive take-overlooks. Catapat worried that "leachate from dumped garbage could seep into water reserves and eventually flow into Laguna de Bay."

In 1996, the LLDA issued Resolution 22 which banned garbage dumping on lake shorelands. The resolution, however, "remains a challenge to LLDA," said Catapat.

Earlier, the LLDA ruling was virtually ignored by the Environmental Management Bureau, which is the agency under the DENR, when it gave IPRI the go-ahead for the transfer of some 100,000 cubic meters of Smokey Mountain materials to Laguna Avenida.

In June 2001, then LLDA director Peter Antonio Abaya even headed the activity in a dump truck. He said IPRI "took an undertaking a very timely taking into account the tragedy that befell the Payatas dumpsite which claimed the lives of hundreds of people."

Always, now assistant secretary of the Office of Development Assistance, said the DENR was "very much aware of the potential danger posed by the Laguna Avenida area." But the DENR, he added, "is also very much opposed to the indiscriminate dumping of garbage in the area."

Worse, the alleged illegal land reclamation in the lake's northwestern fringes continues, said reports reaching the LLDA.

THE LLDA says this is an "illegal land reclamation," referring to squatter huts sitting on what used to be a portion of the Laguna de Bay basin.

SPECIAL REPORT

From huts on stilts to sturdy houses

By in the mid-1990s, water levels of up to 2 meters did not prevent squatter huts on stilts from sprouting in the Laguna Avenida area.

Today, much of the swampy areas used to be dry enough to stop water lilies there are gone. More sturdy houses, some made of concrete, have taken their place.

Almost the boundary of the more than 119 ha. that reclamation covers the boundaries of Barrio Ugong while other parts are claimed by Brgy. Citi and the neighboring town of Cainta.

Conflicting claims and misunderstanding, La Jaena records has become a thriving squatter community.

Who the problem began

But some old hands at the LLDA said the problem started as early as Nov. 28, 1995 when then President FIDEL Ramos issued EP 704, which set aside an 80-ha. portion of the public domain at sitio Tapayan, barangay Sta. Ana in Taytay for housing development.

Brgy. River squatters and Taytay's less privileged families were the supposed beneficiaries of the Ramos directive, said to be pursuant to Republic Act 7279 (Urban Development and Housing Act of 1992).

But could should also go to mountains of garbage collected from all over Metro Manila that have dumped and solidified at Smokey Mountain.

Much of Laguna Avenida, now with a population of more than 25,000 families (and counting), is "standing on some 100,000 cubic meters of garbage and soil dumped into what used to be swampy shorelines," and researchers of IPRI Training and Development Corp., one of the country's top construction, real estate and realty sector consultancies in Manila.

Despite Banaag, IPRI vice president, recalled that sometime in April 2003 Laguna Avenida residents requested for "low-grade compost and other filling materials" from the LLDA.

Several politicians and non-government groups had earlier promised to provide the flood-prone area with filling materials. "But nothing happened," said Rhein Mendelsberg, another IPRI researcher.

In a 2003 letter to IPRI, Avenida Urban Poor Federation president Avelino de los Reyes claimed for several months the area was submerged in water.

The Department of Public Works and Highways, for its part, affirmed that Taguig, among other flood-coastal towns, suffered the "most serious" damage from Typhoon Reming, which is brought about by flash low elevation and overflooding of rivers and drainage channels.

De los Reyes also cited needs of soil tests, purportedly conducted by a University of the Philippines environmental engineering team, which assessed "the low grade compost (from Marikina Mountain) is stable and safe."

Sometime in May 2003, permits were issued to IPRI by Jaime Bautista Jaime Esquerra and barangay Sta. Ana chair Victor Buenaventura.

But unlike De LIPPO, the LLDA is not happy with developments at Laguna Avenida which, it says, is illegal and "not for human habitation."

To date, the LLDA has yet to issue a clearance to any firm engaged in waste management activities in the area.

Dumping of garbage and other waste materials on reclaimed areas is strictly prohibited, assured LLDA general manager Calixto Catapat who called the issue "one of our problems."

Securing the territory was also impressive take-overlooks. Catapat worried that "leachate from dumped garbage could seep into water reserves and eventually flow into Laguna de Bay."

In 1996, the LLDA issued Resolution 22 which banned garbage dumping on lake shorelands. The resolution, however, "remains a challenge to LLDA," said Catapat.

Earlier, the LLDA ruling was virtually ignored by the Environmental Management Bureau, which is the agency under the DENR, when it gave IPRI the go-ahead for the transfer of some 100,000 cubic meters of Smokey Mountain materials to Laguna Avenida.

In June 2001, then LLDA director Peter Antonio Abaya even headed the activity in a dump truck. He said IPRI "took an undertaking a very timely taking into account the tragedy that befell the Payatas dumpsite which claimed the lives of hundreds of people."

Always, now assistant secretary of the Office of Development Assistance, said the DENR was "very much aware of the potential danger posed by the Laguna Avenida area." But the DENR, he added, "is also very much opposed to the indiscriminate dumping of garbage in the area."

1998 by the Smokey Mountain Redevelopment and Development Project executive council."

The DENR, memo also called for the adoption of sound waste management practices during the transfer of Smokey Mountain wastes to Laguna Avenida:

- Application of engineering measures in DPWs scraping activity to ensure that proper steps were achieved at all times;
- Plastics, glass and other nonbiodegradable materials should not be present in the filling materials; and
- Limited percentage of waste materials while hauling trucks were to ensued.

Safe filling material

About the same time Laguna Avenida fell tabbed for filling materials, IPRI was contracted by the Metro Manila Development Authority to rehabilitate the decades-old Tondo dumpsite.

"The problem was solvent to bring the Smokey Mountain garbage, which was already mostly stabilized waste, and to put it in the Tondo area," it's not fresh garbage. It's been there for more than 20 years," Banaag clarified.

IPRI's activity in Tayuman for about six months. "When the IPRI stabilized handling can be done, we dig out the old garbage, we just smoothed the surface in Smokey Mountain where there's still more than 500,000 cubic meters of stabilized garbage," said Mendelsberg.

During the Tayuman operations, IPRI used to fleet of heavy equipment, including 120 10-wheeler heavy dump trucks, 15 mini dump trucks, 4 rear-loading sanitation trucks, 30 backhoes/excavators and 25 bull dozers/crawler tractors.

IPRI is also involved in converting the Payatas open dumpsite into a controlled facility, which costs the Quezon City government about 500 million a month.

IPRI's other projects include the Metro Aquino International Airport complex, Bonifacio Development Center, the 4th St. Tropical Avenue in Taguig City, and the Las Gardenia Tower in Forbes Park, Makati City.

IPRI, which began in the early 1980s handling and trading construction materials, has also been involved in numerous phases of development projects of Pryce Gas Industries Corp., Global Prime Holdings, Daichi Properties, Megaworld, Jardine Properties and Rockwell Land Corp.

Preempting termite invasion of your newly built house

THEY say in making life's biggest decisions, it pays to heed those in the know of what works best or doesn't work at all. The same principle applies in building a home. An expert's advice carries a lot of weight in sending in the nitty-gritty details in and out your construction especially if it involves termite control.

Rodolfo S. Angeles is one person who knows about protecting one's home from termites. He ventured into the pest control business in 1988 and is even better known as "Mr. Pest Control." In March 1997, the prime mover with his wife Nena set up the Multipurpose Pest Control Corp.

MPCC is a family corporation and Angeles is at present the president and general manager by many hands is to provide quality efficient pest control service to customers in the need of protecting their homes against unwanted infestation. Supplies pride in MPCC's quality of services they provide and stresses that transparency is a key to building a good relationship with their clients.

He said the longevity of a home is not only dependent on the quality of design and structure but also providing a sound termite treatment before and after construction.

Ensuring safety

In certain definitions, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Angeles agrees. "It's like preventing rust from getting soft. It is best to let a licensed pest control operator to do the job to ensure safety."

MPCC is one that puts safety as well as quality as top priorities in termite control tactics and other treatments so it has established high standards in training their technical staff. "Every technician must meet our standards. If not, they would have to undergo additional training until they are ready." Having well-trained technicians is important for MPCC to achieve quality results.

Angeles also stresses termite control does not end when homeowners move in to their new home, post-construction treatment is also important. There are two kinds of termite: the one that is inherited by nature, and the one that is to be inherited by termites. So, treatment must be applied even if there are no signs of termites yet.

Customer satisfaction

MPCC ensures quality of service rendered. "Customer satisfaction is very important to us. Giving prompt after-sales service is one of our priorities," he said.

Being in the pest control industry for many years has taught Angeles how to effectively handle customers about their pesky termites. He regular advice to both new and old homeowners? Get long-term termite protection with no-hassle renewals. Convenient. Dependable, an effective termination is known to successfully eliminate termites with its potent treatment before and after construction.

Manufactured by three agro-chemicals, the effective solution also have termite protection and affordable rates for medium low-budget households. What's more, Dursban-TC is lethal to termites but is safe on people and house pets when proper precautions for use are followed. The chemical used is biological able and yields results which are proved to fight out rot.

Families do thrive in less than 100 sq m

MOST maybe would have to believe that the best homes are necessarily those that are in exclusive condominiums. But the bulk of prospective homeowners in Metro Manila are mid-income families with budgets from P900,000 to P3 million for a house-and-lot package, according to studies by LIFE, an media and subsidiary specializing in affordable housing.

Realistically, these would-be's had their homes with floor areas of less than 1,500 square meters, a standard size for growing families, according to IPRI-licensed interior designer Grace Milan. The designer who has projects in Lot on as well as the Visayas has studied homes in UPRI's Sta. Catalina Village in Southern Metro Manila. She concludes: "Quality of life is not directly proportional to one's floor area." Quality of life is not directly proportional to one's floor area," he said. It's totally plan a family's intimate milieu.

Brisk sales

Guided by UPRI's keen reading of what most prospective homeowners in Metro Manila want, the company has in fact been briskly selling Dasmariñas Village's Vi hope ranging from 22 sq m to 97 sq. m. In less than five months, 947 house-and-lot packages in the 42-hectare development have been sold mostly last year. A great part of its success is its location 20 minutes from the Ayala Alabang community developed by UPRI parent company, Ayala Land Inc.

With the opening of Daang Hari Road, a new access route which connects the Alabang-Zapote Road and the Zapote-Bacoor Road along which the development is located, the drive will even be shorter. The access everyone for the Sta. Catalina homes which offer an easy drive to Makati prompted the opening of a new phase in March 2003.

Milan and her team at CMM Designs has come up with floor model units with various decorating themes to help homeowners visualize a comfortable and cozy family life within a range of floor areas below 100 sq m.

What a home should have

The discreet, gentle forces that a home—regardless of size—should have in it, provides a healthy environment by captioning family.

"A healthy home allows many options. The simplest way to determine if a home plan is flexible," says Milan, is to see if the living spaces allow more functions way to position important furniture as a the same width. Sta. Catalina homes include the units in the living room and the beds in the bedrooms. Moreover, the best plan for a limited space is to open one side to two functions and divisions as possible. The usually means that the living, dining and kitchen areas share a common space with short or light-colored dividers that allow easy view the expanse.

"Multiple windows and high ceilings provide a sense of well-being. A home with as many windows as possible and high ceilings is always a boon. The sun only means that the house will be cool since air can circulate freely as in all Sta. Catalina models. It also helps that the sun's rays will be well-lit and allow those who live there a sense of well-being. The things ing should relax," says Milan.

Priority investments

"Homeowners items should be priority investments. When funds are limited, Milan advises homeowners to invest first in the non-movable parts of a home e.g., flooring, kitchen and bathroom tiles. That is because it becomes more difficult and expensive to upgrade these features once one has moved into a home. The remainder of the budget can be used for the smaller improvements like furniture and other movable features which can be upgraded when the family income increases.

"There is wisdom in economy. In a small home, says Milan, it is best to keep furnishings and fixtures simple. Set the Sta. Catalina models, for instance, she says, there are mirrors and simple shades as window treatments as well as light-color furniture that make use of those lines, sizes and richer tones of wood. Keep those furnishings from overpowering a room. No heavy drapes, no bulky beds or sofas with heavy legs. In upholstery, Milan says, it is best to choose accents such as rosaic interior homes—with gold earrings in the romantic shabby chic home; in dark Asian tapestry in the Asian contemporary home. Accessories can make everything dense.

MULTIPLE windows, high ceilings and clever design allow for cozy living even less than 50 sq. m floor area.

LOT TITLE AWARDING. Edsa Shaw Corp. recently held the awarding of lot titles to early buyers at the Manila Polo Club. Located in Sto. Tomas, Batangas, it is owned, conceived and managed by EAB Corp., one of the leading property developers. Edsa Shaw Corp. offers 16 hectares of master-planned community. Early buyers receiving titles to their lots (left) marketing manager Gil Ochoa and EAB board chair Archibald Po look on.

Ponderosa's garden of flowers

By Charles E. Bulos

IMAGINE exquisite flower-lined pathways, cobbled walkways and Mexican-Spanish inspired houses speckled with bougainvilleas, broomsticks, oranges, pink and purple roses.

These are what one can expect at Ponderosa Leisure Farms, the latest exclusive 'flower garden village' from Landco Pacific Corp.

Located just an hour's away from Metro Manila, Ponderosa in Silang, Cavite is designed as a family place where one can enjoy life's modern amenities, theme gardens, nature gardens, and of course, farm services that offer hands-free gardening for residents.

"Ponderosa is a rustic village where one can find nothing but the best. I want people to live in here, relax and enjoy God's creation—it will be a garden to be cared and experienced, not just to look at from a distance," says Landco Pacific's Alfred Steve Borgen III.

This is the idea behind Landco Pacific's second Leisure Farms project (the first one, called simply Leisure Farms in Batangas is the country's first residential hobby farming and agro-tourism development), which targets mainly hobby farmers, or those who are working the week and come in the farm on weekend not to work but to enjoy life's leisure.

"But if Landco Pacific's first Leisure Farms was about hobby farming—using a Filipino architecture theme—Ponderosa, on the other hand is a Mexican Spanish residential garden village," Borgen explains.

The Mexican-Spanish village theme is Maria Luisa Picos Rubio's idea. Landco Pacific's contract to Ponderosa.

"She wanted to give the place a Mexican country feel, as the place is on rolling hills and all, aside from the fact that Mexico and the Philippines have a lot in common, thanks to each occupying for a such a time," says Borgen.

Ponderosa by the way, is derived from the name of a pine tree and a chico tree, one of the plants species most loved by Rubio.

MARIA Luisa Picos-Rubio with her creations at Ponderosa's Ornamental Nursery

For garden lovers

When Ponderosa held its groundbreaking on October, it has opened its doors to garden lovers, pure and simply to the city.

Houses to be built at Ponderosa will take in a hacienda type concept, complete with European, brewery windows, cantoned, tiled roofs, bright pinks, oranges and blues that are so Mexican in style.

"If you love flowers, this 10 hectare property offering lots of around 3,000 sq m) along the gently rolling hills of hacienda's like and Penang Langka in Silang, Cavite is the perfect place to indulge with them," assures Borgen.

But apart from the gardens, Ponderosa also have various other residents can go to:

• Villa Ponderosa has a clubhouse with all the other conveniences where one can relax and enjoy.

• Campo Verde is a campsite—complete with picnic areas, nature trails and barbeque pits...an ideal place to spend quality leisure time with loved ones and friends.

• El Rancho is a themed garden that awakens the senses and enjoy the bounty of nature.

• La Casa is an outdoor dining in a rustic Mexican Spanish setting, with cooking classes of Aida of Rosario and Precious Village Center.

• Plaza Mercedes is a village center where the village store, flower and produce market, food and retail stores, nursery and outdoor dining are located.

VILLA Ponderosa Clubhouse

James Hardie pre-Xmas treat sweetens sales in ongoing promo

WITH CHRISTMAS just around the corner, fiber cement leader James Hardie Philippines, in cooperation with Jollibee, has come up with 'Heaven, Hardie Bound,' a promo that will give buyers of HardiFlex, HardiFlex Lite and HardiFlex Lite Pro a chance to win cold, cut-free cash—a heart celebrate the Yuletide season with.

James Hardie's promotion promo, "Put A Round, Fly Abroad" and lucky HardiFlex homes are all-expense-paid trips to Bangkok, Hong Kong and the United States, among other destinations.

But cash or free trips aside, the biggest prize is the product itself. HardiFlex has products that make it a cost-effective building solution, giving homeowners real estate for money. Made from cement, sand and wood fiber from replenishable forests, it does not warp or rot with age. It is also resistant to termite in paint. Unlike plywood, HardiFlex is water-resistant, so stain-proof and fire-resistant. It also doesn't unleash asbestos.

Participating James Hardie products are HardiFlex Line; HardiFlex 4.5 mm, 6.0 mm, 9.0 mm and 12.0 mm; and HardiFlex Lite Pro 4.5 mm, 6.0 mm, 9.0 mm and 12.0 mm.

According to Hardie marketing manager Jose Sinsay, James Hardie has simplified the process of joining "Santa's Sack Board" by awarding a coupon for every official receipt (OR) a client's bought $50 instead of the usual coupon for every board or product purchased. Participating James Hardie products are HardiFlex 3.0 mm, HardiFlex 4.5 mm, 6.0 mm, 9.0 mm and 12.0 mm; and HardiFlex Lite Pro 4.5 mm, 6.0 mm, 9.0 mm and 12.0 mm.

If there is more than one coupon per OR or BIR, those on top will be selected. The OR or OR will be the basis for the amount of prize money the winner is entitled to receive.

VIVANT FLATS AT CORPORATE CITY

Filomeno Aldeguer, Jr., has unveiled Vivant Flats, a 17-story residential tower at the Corporate City, and named DF Construction as the general contractor and TCGI engineers as the construction manager for the project. FAI vice president Erlinda Tan and Vivant Flats project team head Christopher Collins, second and third from left, present the scale model of Vivant Flats to TCGI president Virgilio Maliksay and Cemex VP for operations Rolando Magsalin.

Building here?

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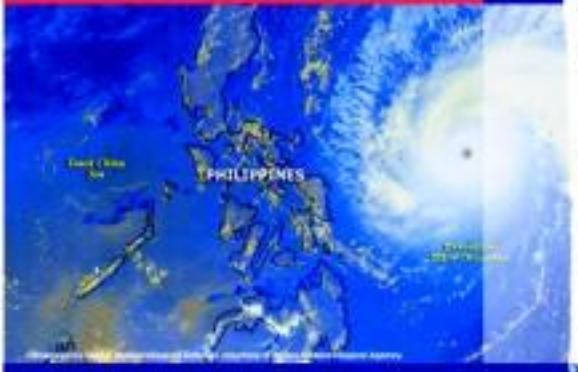

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VOL. 20 NO. 237

OPINION

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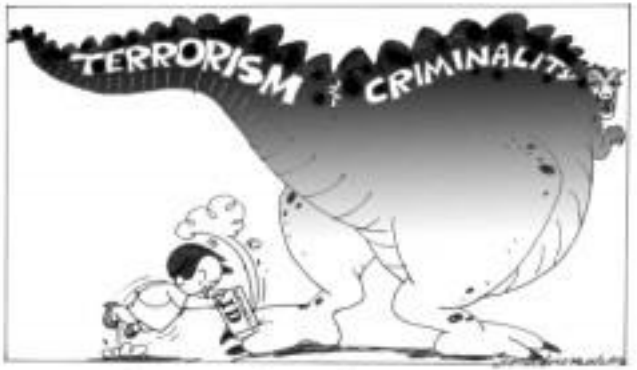

Ineffective deterrent

EDITORIAL

LAST week presidential spokesperson Ignacio Bunye said that President Macapagal-Arroyo was in favor of lifting the moratorium on capital punishment but still had to hold consultations on the matter. In a statement, the President stressed that "the death penalty is not the end-all or heinous crime."

The call for the lifting of the moratorium on the death penalty was made by the Chinese-Filipino community following the death of kidnap victim Bert Chua Sy. The application of capital punishment has been suspended for the past four years.

It is well that the President has not been stampeded to lifting the moratorium and has decided to consult various sectors. There is no evidence that the death penalty is a deterrent to heinous crimes. The enforcement of the death penalty, and at the rate of one death convict per day (there are more than 1,000 death convicts now), as suggested by the Chinese-Filipino community, will only brutalize society and perpetuate the cycle of violence.

Mr Macapagal would be well-advised to study the experience of 13 US states that chose not to enact the death penalty since the US Supreme Court ruled in 1976 that it was constitutionally permissible. A New York Times survey in 2000 showed that the 12 states have not reported higher homicide rates than those where the death penalty is imposed. Indeed, FBI data show that 10 of the 12 states have homicide rates that are lower than the national average.

The New York Times survey also found that during the last 20 years, the homicide rate in states with the death penalty has been 48 percent to 101 percent higher than in states without it. The FBI Preliminary Uniform Crime Report for 2002 said that the murder rate in the US South increased by 2.1 percent while that in the Northeast decreased by almost 9 percent. The South accounts for 82 percent of all the executions since 1976; the Northeast accounts for less than 1 percent.

Statistics Canada reports that the number of homicides in that country in 2001 (546) was 23 percent lower than the number of homicides in 1975 (721), the year before the death penalty was abolished.

In London, data released by the British Home Office show that the US, which still imposes the death penalty, has a murder rate that is more than three times that of many of its European allies where capital punishment has been banned. The data challenge the argument that the death penalty is a deterrent to killings. More than 1.10 criminologists have formed the death penalty in lists in practice.

In 1997, Michael Radelet, chairman of the University of Florida's sociology department, and a longtime researcher of death penalty issues, said that a study found 90 percent of top US criminologists saying that killing people to deter violent crime is a huge waste of time and money.

Instead of lifting the moratorium on the death penalty, the President should take the lead in reviving for its repeal and its replacement with the penalty of life imprisonment without the possibility of parole. Radelet says that when people are asked about reverse sentences, where the only alternative to the death penalty is life without parole, support for capital punishment decreases significantly.

Why should the death penalty be abolished, as at the very least, why should the present moratorium on its application be retained?

First, because it is an irreversible act of violence by the state and has claimed innocent victims. Because human justice (and especially justice in the flawed Philippine system) is fallible, the risk of executing the innocent can never be eliminated.

Second, because, as US Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall said, "The burden of capital punishment falls upon the poor, the ignorant and the underprivileged members of society." What is true in the United States is even more true in the Philippines.

Third, because the death penalty only serves to create more victims and perpetuate a cycle of violence. If a society truly believes that all killing is wrong, it must abolish the death penalty which only serves to brutalize it and to give it to violence.

Fourth, because the trend in modern penology is to create conditions for the reform and rehabilitation of criminals. How can we reform and rehabilitate criminals who have been executed?

We've said it before and we say it again: The problem is not in the severity of the punishment but efficient and effective law enforcement. If would-be criminals know that they will be arrested for sure by law enforcers and put away for life without any chance of parole, that certainly could deter them from committing crimes.

More explanations from Olongapo and Bulacan

(Continued from yesterday)

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

(10) is a continuation of the letter of Mayor Feliciano Gordon of Olongapo regarding her dispute with Secretary Eduardo Ermita's objections to the construction of a container terminal in Subic Bay. In yesterday's column, she said the terminal is unnecessary and in the wrong place. Why waste 6,750 billion debt for a project that can handle 900,000 TEUs instead of where the mineral cargo remains in all of Subic is only 30,000 TEUs? she asked. To justify the new terminal, she added, "we would need to build 18 more berths."

Moreover, a seaport inside the Subic International Airport, she said, would endanger the planes using the airport because of interference from port navigational equipment and tall stacks of containers and loose cargo. Besides, the many people and delivery trucks frequenting the seaport will make the airport extremely vulnerable to terrorists.

"Depending on it economical scenarios," Mayor Gordon continued, "we believe there will be no justice at Subic base will permanently damage Subic's ecological stability. Fragile marine ecosystem and beautiful view. Over 2.2 million cubic meters of fill will be dumped into Leyte Gulf, adversely affecting the marine ecosystem in Subic. There will be damage to coral reefs and breeding grounds fish colonies. Manganese along Baloy will be destroyed with the establishment of access roads to the Subic Terminal."

"The area is also close to popular beaches and dive spots. Officers Beach and most probably All-Hands Beach will be permanently closed, affecting tourism within Subic. The view of the bay that is key to tourism and residential development will be permanently and irreversibly damaged.

"There is an obvious attempt to hush-hush the project to railroad approval and underscore by concerned governmental agencies and local government units. The process has been fraught with trickery, discovery and fraud.

"No true public hearing and genuine and sincere consultations were made with Olongapo City and other areas, the immediate stakeholders in the vicinity. The bidding process began even prior to the consultations process to secure the ECC (environmental compliance certificate) which is being issued after the bid. bidding began as early as August 2002, and the first consultation was held on Sept. 26, 2002 inside Subic, with limited access to LGUs. The second consultation was held on Oct. 27, 2003, in Olongapo City, and only open request to the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources).

"The family has never claimed ownership of Subic or Olongapo. Subic and Olongapo belong to the people of the Republic of the Philippines. It was preserved and protected for us in a contemporary and unselfish land of volunteers who gave us value lives and livelihood so that future generations can benefit from what was left of the former US naval facility. We robbed the next right to turn the abandoned base into what besides the country's greatest showcase of progress and development. And as we fight today so that we can preserve for our future our environment and so that our people will not be further burdened with yet another bureaucratic red tape that our children and grandchildren will have to cope."

Finally, I take exception at Mr. Paynor's claim that we are trying to delay the project because we are allegedly lobbying for my appointment as SBMA chairman, and would prefer for the chair to push through when I might be in Malacañang. The truth is that I am not married and I have never in our lives asked or lobbied for appointment to any government position. All our lives, we have served our people and stood shoulder to shoulder with them during the most difficult times in our history. We will continue to do so, and, unlike Mr. Paynor, we need no title and position to do it."

* * *

Here's another letter, this time from the provincial government of Bulacan, reacting to our column of Nov. 13, 2003 regarding the purchase by the Bulacan government of 50 vehicles out of those in the inventory allegedly controlled by the family of Gen. Jose de la Cruz. The letter, written by Ms. Cecilia Tirol of the public affairs office, says that:

"The province of Bulacan does not have a car pool. The fifty vehicles mentioned are either for personal use of provincial officials. Vehicles that have been purchased by the province that are assigned to department heads remain as government property and are strictly for official use only. There are no luxury vehicles. No board members or councilors are assigned service vehicles at all."

Tirol continued that a total of 29 vehicles (not 50) were purchased by the province, including six for the Bulacan PNP (two ambulances, and 11 for various departments.

She also admitted that the vehicles were bought from Freeway Motor Sales, "not because of any personal benefit from either of the late de la Cruz family ... but because the terms offered were very advantageous to the government. As to the ownership of the corporation, records provided by the Securities and Exchange Commission showed that although Josefina Mendoza was an original incorporator of Freeway Motors, he divested his shares in the company on Sept. 26, 2000. The Mendoza family, therefore, does not own a single share of the corporation nor does the de la Cruz family."

* * *

TIMELY JOKE: 1974 was unveiling an international conference on the environment. A delegate asked him, "Do you have pollution in the Philippines?"

FM: "Oh, plenty of pollution. We have *chinkerous*, *stag assassins*, *Filipino dilis*, *rapes*, *pests*, *dengue*, and many more."

Lay of the land

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

(Conclusion)

WHAT GMA has going for her is the Comelec, for by the fellow who heads it, Benjamin Abalos, has been part of the problem rather than the solution. Among others, he has shortened the registration period and made it the busiest thing for people to register, seconded the wiretapping bid for administration hunting and insisting in the qualified bidder and insisted on preventing Namfrel from doing a quick count for fear in favor of his own group that would do the same thing for P100 million.

Can GMA win with his help? It's possible. But she has been given a run for it by another Iloko. The first one was sparked by massive cheating by Marcos in the "snap elections."

Otherwise, next year's elections looks like a fight between FPJ and Raul Roco, the second and first-placer in Pulse Asia's survey respectively.

FPJ is popular, no doubt about that. I remember that the Ateneo Aquinas Society organized him as organizer for the release of a TV program after he had kidnapped. Up was not in Pacific, who had formed Movida, instead. But the same. Not instantly for the evangelist, he was released anyway, though he might have paid less than P10 million.

There are a couple of reasons why his association with Erap—Erap is his kumpare and Erap's bandilero, chief of them Edgardo Angara, sits behind him—won't hurt him. The first is that Filipinos have short memories. Or Filipinos have a limited capacity to comprehend the belief, to imagine that what happened before won't happen again. To this day, many Filipinos are willing to give authoritarianism a second chance in the hope that in lieu of a standard Marcos, a decent one like Mikaylin or Lee Kuan Yew will wield the iron fist.

That's what FPJ's handlers are pitching: He is not Erap, despite the obvious similarities. Unlike Erap, he is clean. He went wanting! Erap chose "cronyism" with unsavory characters. Certainly, he did not profit from his kumpare's position, preferring, according to fellow co-entertainer Tito Sotto, to stay away from Malacañang, much to the temper of his kumpare. And the clincher: He won't have a Second or Third Lady, only a First One.

The second reason is that GMA has handed the opposition attending to Erap. The sentimental perception isn't just that the GMA administration is no better than the one it replaced, it is that it is worse. The surveys show all the administration candidates lagging behind those of the opposition, notably Edward Jurdon Santos, stuck at becoming anyone. That can only be attributed to the "Hocks factor" She is bringing them down.

There is one thing FPJ should worry about, and that it is bankable. The skin of the presidency having his decision to run, whether real or the product of government propaganda, threatens to open the floodgates to it. For based people supreme fears over another movie star becoming president. Those are middle and upper middle class people who have the ear of the media and whose opinions matter. If those voices or noises swell, FPJ might find himself in a position not unlike Standing Colmenares in 1992: drubbed by fear.

That Roco should remain number one in the surveys is remarkable. He hasn't had a high profile three past months—indeed since he resigned from the Department of Education. The only times he landed on front page and prime time was when he announced he was running for President and when he defended Davide from his detractors.

One of the reasons for his continued strong showing in the surveys is that he has an image of being clean and competent. In contrast, the image of Erap is one of the first category and the second in a decrease offline. The charges of corruption have obviously not hurt him. They pervaded Erap since the beginning of his term. Nobody goes past putting out his pictures to attendees, a charge GMA is guilty of. More than that, if there was evidence of wrongdoing, Ulilt would have already done so by now after the fall to Lacson, who is making his an object of a sensational inquiry. Ulilt still does that, if Roco had not resigned from the Cabinet, he could even now be using its resources to campaign. That is not the behavior of a corrupt person.

But the more important reason for Roco remaining number one in surveys is that the events of the last few months have given the elections an ideological spin. Those events include the country's participation in the invasion of Iraq, the war in Mindanao, the Davide scandal involving the Palol appeal, the Davide impeachment, the Sala takeover, the Reid bomber, mounting rallies and coup rumblings. All of which have primed the society to a bad, and driven people to ask, "What is happening to the country?" That was the case in the 1998 elections, which was coming from relatively well-off times. The 1997 financial crisis had not yet bitten deeply into the economy. The elections were just a choice between personalities, one whom the most popular stood to inherit the crown.

Today's elections have a more ominous sense of urgency, not unlike the "snap elections" of 1986. That has swept Roco into the limelight. Despite his not being associated with charismatic, dramatic or media-savvy, cutting him into the only real alternative to two groups that have proved ruinous to the country, the administration and the opposition. He is the "the least evil," as Jose Ma. Sison puts it, or "the best hope," as his own alliance of lawyers, Reporma and Fremdl puts it. The backlash from FPJ's candidacy stands to benefit him. I have heard people say that when it comes down to the ballot box, they are not sure. They will support Roco because they cannot abide the thought of another six years of an Erap-type leader, which could spell the end for the country. Roco gets more media hugs, not to mention votes, and becomes somewhat a relative paunchy in organization and resources.

That's the lay of the land, and it's not entirely without hope.

News of reward draws 100 phone calls daily

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo is standing firm on her decision to set a reexamination on expired death penalty, despite tremendous pressure to lift it, warning family from the Chinese-Filipino community and recently lawyer Joe Cuilo, president of the kidnapped-for-ransom victims, that a controversial issue may be the right of the state of full. Arroyo, in her words, didn't remember it to against it, showing political will. She argues that statistics have not shown that in all the years it was being implemented in the Philippines, capital punishment actually curbed criminality. The President is also willing to debate on it anywhere in the enlightened world, which believes that criminals can be rehabilitated, and that quite often, criminals are wrongly sent to death row. The President is the highest official of the Catholic Philippines. It will be recalled that Arroyo had personally negotiated for the death penalty by fighting up the Cabinet for many days.

* * *

Instead of killing a lawyer, the President has sought to suffer a renewed system for information on criminal gangs. In this connection, Speaker Jose de Venecia has authorized the allocation of P500 million from congressional funds for the reward system, and recently, P50 million was released by the President. The Speaker said that the response to the reward system has been overwhelming. The day the news came out, his office got more than 300 calls right away. But information is only as good as its source. Some callers are out to get their friends by describing should complement determined efforts to turn other kidnap gangs.

* * *

In Sen. Nick de Carlos' running for president, as a newspaper eventually happened, as he was pressed over with GMA, as mentioned. A Lakas senatorial stalwart subjected to the columnist that "Bahaylon" is being promised as GMA's running mate, perhaps to capitalize on his popularity as a Mindanao leader and NCR. But a Lakas leader from Batangas has intimated that the "Mindanao Group" Leo called because they must regularly vet that they, composed of De Castro and Senators Juliet Arroyo, Manuel Villar, Francis Pangilinan and Ralph Recto, is trying to make him run for the presidency. The group originally urged that while GMA and the MEG CEPS have everything to gain from his candidacy, Kabayan himself has little to gain from having No. 1.

Nothing to gain? If he votes Lacal few pundits decide he, Jr. Cuneo would be one heartbeat away from the presidency 100% herself, when she agreed to run with JDV, perhaps didn't expect to be president two and a half years later.

* * *

The story of conjoined Filipino twins Carl and Clarence Agcaoili is being followed not just by the international medical world but by people around the world because of its human drama. The twins from Negros Occidental have to go through four very delicate operations to separate them at the head. We pray for the success of Dave Gural and Jacobi operations at the Montefiore Hospital in New York in the next few weeks. Conjoined twins occur in approximately one in every 100,000 live births, but twins joined at the head are said to be caught one in 10 million live births. Many agencies came together to make the operations on Dave Agcaoili more possible. The Philippine Orthopedic Center with Cecile Guidote-Alvarez every Sunday evening at 9:15 p.m. we had the privilege of featuring Monsita Aquino-Antonovich, chief of the Philippine Airlines Foundation, which provided a free trip to the U.S. to the twins and their mother. In fact, I congratulate the foundation for its many missions of mercy for sick patients, not only in this country but abroad too.

* * *

The Catholic bishops' spokesperson, Fr. James Reuter, S.J., who writes a Sunday column in the Star, recently (and) tribute to the greatness of the Filipino artists. The contest be disputed. The recent international triumph of the Lolos Children's Choir of Bohol, which a men being hailed as the best version of the famed "Ateneo Hymn" (Dear, it on records. Speaking of Ateneo, when I was there after the Philippine National Oil Company won the recent Energy Globe awards in Linz, I met with Leonel Carmin, son of my dear friend Paparazzo/Curator of Los Baños, Laguna, who has been a consultant to the Ateneo Observatory over the past few years. Leonel, who is in early 30s, is, in spirit, our unofficial public Ambassador. Victor Garcia, the best known Filipino name there. Its mega casino-spaces rules not only in Vienna but in Sweden, Norway and many countries.

* * *

When I met him, Leonel was in the midst of final rehearsals for a role in "Seattle" by theater company from Joseph Haydn. I asked other actors, like Ms. Ma. Olivia Ortiz, one of the world's music capitals, and he said that the Peter can hold his own against the best. "Many times, indeed, we are better," he said, although he admitted that he is being fed by Johann Strauss Orchestrals. He noted, for instance, that Asian singers auditioning for roles in an opera to be shown in Tokyo would suffer from discrimination, as the Japanese prefer Caucasians. To offset certain Occidental images, such as the lack of expressiveness supposed to the Filipino artists, Leonel said they just have to work double hard.

I asked how it felt to be working with some of the biggest names in the opera world, and he replied that it's often the big stars who are the humblest. He recalled working with Spanish tenor Placido Domingo who made it a point to know each and everyone in the cast. What about Filipino artists? Leonel: "I cringe when I recall him saying that one has to have the voice, but in the end what matters are the work and the discipline one puts into one's career that there's true of every human endeavors—work and discipline truly pay off.

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

In pursuit of the common good

COMMENTARY

Nandy Pacheco

home. At the same time, let us "unlearn" what we have learned from histories: a gun culture and gun violence.

Fifth, working for the common good usually requires common sense. In order to facilitate the arrest of criminals or violators of the gun law, the government must enforce the law (as if there is more gun-control banning the use of heavy gun on

> We challenge the politicians to pursue the common good rather than cave in to the demands of special interests

windows of motor vehicles. In other civilized countries, the use of tinted windows in motor vehicles is not allowed. It is in the "dark" where crime is committed or where criminals hide. It is the use of, or possession of, illegal drugs and crime-related activities that are done in the dark. Let us be ready to suffer personal inconvenience for the common good. Crime is committed where criminals find it easy to hide.

Sixth, long prison terms without parole or pardon (and the death penalty) should be meted out to gun law violators and those found guilty of illegal possession of firearms. The same severer punishment should be imposed on law enforcement officers who "plant" evidence against innocent individuals.

Seventh, transparency should be the rule. No firearm orders should be given to civilians and no firearms should be issued to plainclothesmen. The authorities should not arrest firearm holders who will give rise to temptation. Sometimes, plainclothesmen pretend to be criminals and criminals pretend to be plainclothesmen.

Eighth, as an additional security measure legitimate gun owners should be required to install gun safes/vaults in their homes where they can keep their firearms.

Ninth, there should be a periodic inventory and decommissioning as well as destruction of all confiscated firearms.

Tenth, the sale and public exhibit of guns and firearms should be banned inside military or police camps, but not in malls and other public places. In addition, the importation of high-caliber firearms for personal use or sports purposes should also be banned.

May we hear from the President and the members of Congress and those aspiring to run for public office their reactions to these proposals? Do challenge the politicians to pursue the common good rather than cave in to the demands of special interests. If they are sincere about protecting the common good, they should sincerely.

Concerned citizens of the Philippines cannot go on the campaign trail without armed bodyguards should not run at all. Their families need them more than the country does. And they should not set a bad example for their constituents.

Finally, for the sake of a peaceful and orderly election, I appeal to the Commission on Elections not to give exemptions from the gun ban to candidates and other civilians during the election period.

Nandy Pacheco is the spokesperson of Partners-Initiatives for Democracy and Development. Comments may be e-mailed to him at pidd@hotmail.com or call 433-2790.

The 19th century friars

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Ramón L. Harper

BACK in the mid-19th century, there was definitely an anti-friar and even anti-religious sentiment among Spanish intellectuals, an attitude seldom denounced by Filipinos.

Half a century before, an English visitor from Hong Kong, Henry Ellis, remarked that the hatred of the friars had a pejorative connotation among the Spaniards. But while the more educated Spaniards carried little for them or their doctrines and usually used them as the butt of jokes, it could not be denied that their influence over the Filipinos was equal to that found elsewhere under the "ancien regime."

As the rest of the century, after Spain had lost the Philippines to the United States, Nicolas Ossa Press published his opinion of the less contending that it was the religious orders that lost the country for Spain. It was, according to him, "the secular wealth of the friars. Such was their riches and their encompassing power that any other influence was impossible except for theirs." The author did not believe that the insurrection was due to the Masons or fomented in the Masonic lodges as General Blanco asserted. Monastery was expressly new to the Philippines and was introduced by Dr. Mariano Martí in 1894. It did not, however, prosper. In 1871 Father Manuel Torres established lodges too, but only for Spaniards. It wasn't until 1886 that Filipinos were admitted as members.

Ossa also expressed the opinion that the friars were personal. One friar claims that in general any impartial data about the situation in the Philippines were considered "filibustering" by the friars. Even the secretary of Gen. Primo de Rivera, Lt. Col. Antonio Lopez who wrote "Las Islas Filipinas," "was frowned upon by the friars."

On May 1, 1898, the American squadron appeared in front of Manila and General Augusto Monet ordered the bombardment, shortly thereafter, the palace and went to live outside the Walled City in a convent. It was rumored that at the least sign of bombardment the carriage of Neutrals was soon hurrying away. It seemed, they said, that he was on the way to hide in a convent.

Command of the plaza was now taken over by General Jaudenes and a new Junta de Autoridades was formed. Archbishop Nozaleda did everyone to intervene now that the democrats and Filipinos had it surrounded. He continued to insist to convince the generals and government chiefs of the expediency of surrendering to the Americans considering that defense was useless and trying to diminish the just pretexts order of the valiant military.

But on Aug. 13, the plaza was surrendered. Nozaleda began his work among the native priests in order to conserve his position as archbishop of Manila while the entire town seemed abandoned friars and embarked for Spain.

The efforts of Nozaleda did not stop here, according to the author. He went to see General Otis to petition for the release of two Spanish soldiers accused of being responsible for the death of two native soldiers.

The archbishop was regarded by the author here. He and alone in the assessment of the American general, like a good merchant dealt ("un prefiere dulce que no a pale lenguas"). A message from Otis told the archbishop that the general could not interfere with the civil affairs of the country.

This was said in such an insulting tone that filled the author with anger, despite the fact that he obviously had little use or love for Nozaleda. But he did imply that the archbishop was trying to redeem up to Otis to convince him to remain loyal as the Spanish had been.

(*From "Las Frailes de Filipinas," Manila Diario Press, 1904.*)

Papa and his music

MUSIC has always filled our home ever since I can remember.

My father used to play the piano and the organ and taught a choir in our parish church and in different schools. Papa was so good in music that most people expected us, his children, to follow in his footsteps.

I used to play the piano when I was young. Papa would test us one step until I got to play the notes right. But the MTV era got the better of us and I succumbed to my little fingers (with Papa's permission, of course). Papa's music was always a source of joy and entertainment in the family. It strengthened the ties that bound us together. Every family affair was not complete without all of us gathering around the piano, singing our hearts out as he played.

YOUNG BLOOD

Angelie Nikki A. Rubio

> *We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twenty-something and below. — Ed.*

The melodious music carried a different tune when Papa got sick. I was 12 when it happened. At that time I wasn't really bothered by his illness. I always looked up to Papa as a strong man. He made him decisions and was a role I drew passion.

After a few months he got well and was able to return to work. Everything was back to normal... or so I thought.

Then last year, he got sick again. I was already old enough to know that Papa's condition needed a great deal of attention. We went to Manila to have him treated. We were told that he needed to undergo a series of operations.

Knowing how strong Papa was, I was sure he would go through everything in a breeze, although deep inside I was scared. He was in the operating room for 10 long hours and had to be brought in there again twice after a few days. Papa survived, and after staying for a month in the hospital, Papa was allowed to come home. I was proud of the courage he showed.

We went back to the province and began a new life. I thought everything was back to normal. I was wrong. Every day the whole family prayed that he would get well, but I could sense that something inside him was stopping him from going on with his normal life.

One night I heard Papa telling Mama: "Why did this have to happen? Why?"

Tears began to fall from my eyes, and I couldn't help but ask God the same question: "Why did this have to happen to Papa?"

Whenever we went to Manila for Papa's regular check-up, his doctors told us that complete recovery would take a long time but he'll be okay.

But I noticed that Papa was slowly changing. He was becoming insensitive. He lost his cool easily. And he was saying nasty things about himself. I feared that his spiritual life was going way to despair.

Papa's condition made me strive harder in school. But no amount of success could fill the void I felt inside. Papa was always becoming more and more lonely. I would see weekends of his illness. He was there physically but he was not the same Papa that I used to know.

Every night I would pray to the Lord to heal Papa physically, emotionally and spiritually. I wished for my prayers to be answered, so no one will have to see tears shed over him ever again. Everything in pain and I promised my mom to see him that way because I couldn't do anything but pray.

On Sept. 8 this year, Papa was rushed to the hospital. When I heard about it, I was afraid but I tried to push the pain and thoughts from my mind. I prayed, "Lord, let your will be done." It was the hardest prayer I had ever said, but the three words rendered me strength.

On Sept. 9, Papa died. I thought I was ready and prepared for whatever might happen to him but I was not. I felt lost, sad, depressed, afraid. It was very difficult to let go of someone very dear to me.

I felt very depressed but remember I also felt at peace. He was not suffering in life, but Papa had been completely healed spiritually. It was quite heartening to know that he passed away on the Blessed Mother's birthday. I believed Mama Mary held Papa's hand as he made his way to God's kingdom. Later Fourteen, Papa and Mama were joined the rosary in the hospital on the very morning before Papa breathed his last.

Standing before the coffin, I remember vividly. It was enough, wonderful memories of the times I had with Papa flashed through my mind. Everything around me seemed to remind me of him. But still the fact remained that I would never see him again.

Seeing his wake, many people came to pay their last respect. Masses were said by several priests whom Papa had served when he was still active in the music ministry of our parish. Church organizations held prayer vigils every day. The outpouring of sympathy from so many people was a source of comfort for me.

I will always admire Papa. He was not perfect but he was my role model. He spent his life offering his services to the Church and unselfishly sharing his musical talents for the greater glory of the Lord.

I didn't cry much during his burial, although I was hurting badly within. I was deeply touched when Papa was carried to church and the grand choir sang at the funeral Mass.

"He's in heaven now," someone whispered. "His music will always be heard inside the church." This strengthen thoughts pride and joy to the church." "Now is the music." These words, spoken by his friends and colleagues in their eulogies, will be forever etched in my memory.

Standing before his coffin, I said my last goodbye to Papa and added his prayer: "Lord, grant him the desire of his heart, approve of. Your peace of all I told him how much I loved and cannot him that I would always love him.

Like one of the men who delivered a eulogy at his funeral said, Papa's death was not the end but only the beginning— the beginning of a new life for me, my sister, my brother and Mama. The way I see it, God is full of surprises. We don't know what the future has in store for us. But armed with the wisdom I gained from Papa's short but meaningful journey here on earth, I will face the challenges head on.

I still miss Papa's death, and even though I know he's happy playing music in heaven, I miss him terribly. Only recently when I was filling up application forms for my college admission exam, I could hardly bring myself to write "deceased" in the space provided for "Father's Status." It would probably take some time for me to get used to it.

One thing I am sure of is that Papa's music will never die. I can always play it anytime and anywhere I want, because his music is in my heart.

Angelie NIKKI A. Rubio, 18, is a senior at St. Mary's Academy of Pagsanjan (Laguna). She also writes for the school organ, The Marian Herald.

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More than common sense is needed

GERNANDO Paz JCI's reply to the one-on-one interview with a TV news correspondent left me in complete awe and wonder. When confronted with the question how he would address the country's persistent problems (e.g., kidnapping, economic crisis/poverty), his confident answer was simply: "common sense."

I wondered what my old PSY meant by "common sense." To me common sense simply means the logical function common to us all. Regardless of situations and other technical expertise), which we use in dealing with everyday dilemmas.

Given the above definition, may I remind my idol that the Presidency entails more than "common sense." In this day and age, the presidency is expected to deal with complex and overlapping problems in governance, economics, society, among others (things I thought do not double in depth and particulars of PFJ, recent political history teaches us that the country's problems entail much more than integrity and patriotism. Technical competence, i.e., business acumen and the political will to implement reforms, should form a significant part of the resume of the presidency.

Though one may argue that technical competence may be minimized with a battery of economic and policy advisers, this cannot replace genuine expertise possessed by a leader. Given a situation where advisers conflict on policy issues, the president must possess the necessary acumen to weed the impasse and decide what's best for the country. He formula failed in this regard when he chose to listen to his Estrada-era rather than judge policies based on merit.

In the end, I only have one thing to say to my old PFJ: When you go out in the field in campaign and you hear the deafening cries of your fans, please do not mistake them for the legitimate voices of the Filipino people. Think hard on the concerns things you can do for them. If you can't think something concrete, you still have time to do what is best.

—RICOS. DE LEON ZEUS
Department of Political Science,
University of the Philippines, Diliman,
Quezon City

Best credentials to head Philippine Sports Commission

THE TRIATHLON of Mike Irom on Philippine Sports, 1958, 11-25-2002), is the current and most talented analysis of what is wrong and how these deficiencies can be corrected in order to get our sports programs out of its present lethargy. Iroom possesses the best credentials to head a national sports body. His experience in the highest level of the sports hierarchy as Deputy Director of the defunct Ginoong Ang president of the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC), and currently coordinating the sports affairs of a local government unit in Ilocos Norte is unmatched by any current pretender to the chairmanship of the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC).

Having been a BAP champion runner himself, no Filipino, past or present, can equal the experience of Michael Marcos Iroom when it comes to Philippine Sports. If President Gloria Macapagal put in mind that chief about sports being a medium to develop national pride (just look at what Manny Pacquiao recently did to bolster the sagging Filipino sense of worth), then she should put Iroom appointed Boss to the PSC.

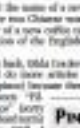
—FRANCISCO B. MEJOS, Ph.D.
President, Philippine Association of
Physical Educators, Inc. (PAPE)

LETTERS

'Hua fei'

HUA FEI isn't the name of a new Chinese cookbrand. They're two Chinese words that appear on the cover of a new coffee table book, a direct translation of the English title "Chinese Filipinos."

Some time back, Hilda Cordero Fernando told me I should do more articles about Chinese Filipinos because there's still a great divide between "Filipinos" and "Chinese Filipinos" (sorry about the awkward terms) and Chinese. Well, I think this book does more than what I could ever hope to accomplish even if I were to devote all my attention for the next few years to matters Chinese.



PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

"Chinese Filipinos," a joint production of Tahanan Books and Asiaworks de Manila's Chinese Heritage Center, is a visual feast. It not only helps to explain the Chinese world, not just to Filipino Filipinos but to Chinese themselves. The chapter titles hint at what you get in the book: "Between Worlds," "Uncanning of Foreigners," "Ancestral Homes," "Clothes of Chinese," "Aspects of Guardians," "Pilipo Pilo Ate," "A Symphony of Manners," "Whither Now?"

We are taken back to Fujian (Hokkien), the Chinese province where most Chinese have their lot in ancestral home, to Kinjoton Island, where now migrants had to stay, sometimes for months on end, while their immigration papers were processed. There's even a photograph of "our Jr. Dambuan Chinese for "big wrestle"), the certificate of landing allowing someone to enter the Philippines. Many literally received new identities through the land, getting a new name different from that what/where they had back in China.

The bulk of the book is devoted to the present. Lush colors splash across the pages, introducing us into the many facets of Chinese life. From fine classrooms to Chinese schools where kids learn how to read and write thousands of Chinese words. Get a whiff of the incense from temples, and the sparkling (fire sprays) from Chinese restaurants. And plug your ears as firecrackers go off and dragon dancers prance along the streets during Chinese festivals.

For a coffee table book, this one is actually quite text-heavy, with essays contributed by Ellen D. Dalusay (who was also the general editor), Chiara Dalusay (who was responsible for the many rest of the book), Teresita Ang See, Go-pe Ely, Lisa T. Gokongwei, Benito O. Lim, Jonathan Chua, Armando Dy, Francisco Nemenzo, Doreen Yu, Doreen G. Fernandez, Queena Lee Chua, Caroline J. Sin, John Raffenbeny Ong, Go Bon Juan and an Inquirer-colonist-consultant Tan.

My mother observed that the essays, including the one I wrote, tended to be rather grandiose and heavy, which led me to wonder if the book reflects the point we've reached in the evolving Chinese experience, where younger generations in fact become more introspective, curious about the past even as we look to the future.

I was thrilled, for example, to see photographs from the province of Fujian, from which more than 80 percent of Chinese immigrants came. Yet I was slightly disappointed to find most of the photographs were of Xiamen, the largest city. The fact is that most Chinese trace their lot to dirt-poor rural areas. It is important that younger Chinese, especially the more affluent ones, get reminded that it was poverty that pushed our grandparents and great-grandparents to leave Fujian, fighting great odds to carve out a new life.

I also felt the book has too little of the experiences of the Chinese outside of Metro Manila. Recently while in Legazpi City I stayed at Jonathan's Gardens Hotel and was pleasantly surprised to find out that the owner, Johnny Sorbis, was the son of a Chinese migrant surnamed Co. The Chinese are in fact quite widely dispersed, from Cagayan up north down to Davao (where my paternal grandfather settled down) and as Sulu and Tawi-tawi.

Of course, it is unrealistic to expect one book to cover the entire Chinese experience. I'm sure there will be some readers who will ask why, besides the two in this book, there aren't more recipes. I found myself wanting more information on language, on religion, on the Chinese in politics, and on issues not covered in the book, such as the "chat-n-ate" (Chinese-mestiza and mestizo) experience.

That lamenting for more does reflect how effective the book is as a kind of appetizer. I'm hoping that non-Chinese after reading the book, will ask Chinese friends for more information, and I'm hoping, too, that we will see more books about the Chinese, perhaps taking up a challenge from Caroline Sin's essay: "No one can claim to organize without being framed to question the mainstream perspective we are supposed to be integrating," wisely warning us, especially in these troubled times, that "integration is no panacea that unwittingly and unappealing will end."

I drew some hope from the book. It is, on one hand, an assertion of the varieties of Chinese-ness in the Chinese. Yet at the same time, it is a book that is thoroughly Filipino, in linguistic style, in photographs, in lay-out, all bearing a Pinoy stamp. The deconstruction of the blending of the "Chi" and the "ino" becomes the book's most important message: that no one is really but's Filipino, that regardless of our ethnic origin(be) Bahasa or Tagalog or "Hokk," we must all struggle to become Filipino.

Ready to get Hua Fei? In Mercedes, the book's available at Xavier School in San Juan; Ateneo de Manila's Areté Communications office at the Loyola campus; Rizal Heritage Center in Intramuros; La Solidaridad Bookshop in Binondo and the Jensen books on Del Pilar and Del Mundo streets; and at Old North Bike (Quezon Boulevard). Outside of Metro Manila, you can get the book at Xavier School, Juan at Cebu and Sta. Tomas Pueblo in Iloilo. If you still can't find the book call this/these number: 426-1971.

"Chinese Filipinos" comes at a non-profit price of P1,300, quite a bargain for a quality coffee table book. You won't even have to gift-wrap the book since its cover comes in presentation red, with "Hua Fei" embossed in gold, making it look like a giant ang pao, those red paper envelopes with cash given out by the Chinese on special occasions. Like the ang pao, this is a book that will entice, but unlike the red cash envelopes, this is a gift that will endure.

SPORTS

E-mail: jr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Teddyboy S. Molmisa
Associate Editor Edwin M. Villanueva

ARCHER Jennifer Chan is temporarily in third place. PHOTO

Ella Reyes rip Taiwanese on Arnika's two-hitter, forges match with Japanese.

SEA GAMES

Matan on target; water polo team falls

HANOI—Filipino archer Florante Matan Jr. got off to a roaring start in the 22nd Southeast Asian Games here yesterday by breaking the SEAG record in the 70-meter distance at the National Sports Training Center 1.

The 5-foot-7, 20-year-old carpenter's son from Cauayan, Northern Samar, tallied 304 points to pass Indonesia's Kusnendro (298), Malaysia's Muhamad Marhaini Sulaiman and Indonesia's Simongungsi, both with 296.

Matan bettered by one point the mark set by another Filipino, Necilbeth Peagbed, two years ago in Johor Bare, Malaysia.

Over at the National Aquatic Sports Complex, the Philippine playoff with great intensity and determination, but dropped a 6-5 heartbreaker to defending champ pulo champion Singapore.

"Matao lang [Tough luck]," said coach Roy Galang later.

Singaporean Lee Chok Yee knocked in the winning goal with only 43 seconds left in the tightly fought, exciting contest.

Meanwhile, the team bids of the Philippine delegation here and in the sesquin city of Ho Chi Minh is scheduled to arrive today.

A total of 585 officials and athletes from 14 sports will be coming in three separate flights—two via PAL, including a chartered plane, and one via Cebu Pacific.

Philippine Sports Commission chair Eric Buhain and commissioners Jose Montemayor and Michael Barredo head the 295-man group from swimming, diving, athletics, rowing, gymnastics, basketry, arnis, taekwondo, shooting and wrestling who are due here today.

Deputy chief of mission Cojo Reynaldo Dejo (ret.) leads the 98 officials and athletes from basketball, soft tennis, sepak takraw, dancesport, wushu, karate, pencak silat, boxing, judo, weightlifting, cycling, billiards and snooker, fencing, modern pentathlon, triathlon, canoeing, sailing, golf, tennis, lawn bowling, shooting, archery, equestrian, volleyball, beach volleyball, football, rugby, futsal, aquatics and water polo.

Pacquiao US tax cheat after all

By Solven L. Lagumbay

MANNY Pacquiao, the current toast of Philippine sports, is not evader in the US.

The reigning IBF supermidweight champion, who recently pulled off a titanic win over Mexican featherweight great Marco Antonio Barrera, owes the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) $250,000 in taxes from four previous fights in the United States.

An Inquirer source said the amount does not include the taxes from Pacquiao's 12th round technical knockout win over Barrera, in which the Filipino was allocated a $700,000 purse by pay-per-view giant HBO.

Dicbo Fernandez, a top immigration boxing journalist in the US, told the Inquirer that the tax payment is the responsibility of Pacquiao's American promoter, Murad Muhammad, and his business manager, Rod Nazario.

It was Nazario who announced that Pacquiao was getting only $250,000 for the fight with Barrera. But he later admitted the actual purse was $750,000.

Pacquiao first fought in Las Vegas, Nevada, in June 2001, where he captured the IBF title from Lehlohonolo via seventh-round TKO.

He retained his title with a technical draw against Agapito Sanchez in San Francisco in November and kept it again with a second-round stoppage of Jorge Eliecer Julio in Memphis in June 2002. Pacquiao then halted Emmanuel Lucero in Las Vegas in his fourth title defense last July.

Laranang fires ace; Baguio CC paces Flight D

By Al S. Mendoza

BAGUIO CITY—Innocencio Laranang scored a hole-in-one yesterday even as host Baguio Country Club emerged among the leaders in four divisions at the start of the 54th Fil-Am Golf Invitational.

Laranang, a client of marketing firm Strategic Promotions & Trade Inc. here as the pro 2 CEO of BCC under an unusually nippy cold weather in this mountain city.

It was his third hole-in-one since he picked up the game 11 years ago. He previous aces were at No. 4 in 2000 and No. 6 in 2002, both at the nearby Camp John Hay.

He first hit an ace yesterday using a Callaway three-wood and a Staff No. 3 ball in the company of Allan Lewis of Sengmun Manila and Team Baguio B's Jonathan Aquino.

Laranang's ace, worth 5 points, earned him 23 points.

BCC here had 384 points to pace Fil-Oriental's Flight D at the BCC for the day's other significant story in the battle among teams reserved in the lower divisions of C, D, E and F.

Country had the Fil-Oriental's Flight C with 92 in the 4,839-yard, par-81 Baguio Country Club, while Team Baguio I had 99 to pace the ten Driskoll's Flight Grand Sampaguita Premium I had 87 for the Driskoll's C leadership at Camp John Hay.

Five players play for each team everyday with the top four scores counting in the tournament presented by Sister Communications and sponsored by Northwest Airlines and Grand Caribbean Entertainment.

The top seeds in both Fil-and-Am Divisions, led by defending champ-one Off-Southwoods in the HONdation and Filipinas GRILL in the Am Division, will play starting tomorrow.

Glenn Sagat led BCC with 28, followed by George Lawrence with 26, and Luis Sison and Fred Lawsin 25 each in the scho that it also supported, among others, by Nas Air, Baguio Willow Sports, Heritage Park, San Miguel Corps, Galileo, Lamoiyan, Shehai, Francis Cobra and U-Bix Corporation.

Scores for Champion were Leo Rivera Stanton (26), Dan Pajarin (24) and Nick Borja (23).

All 1-96 teams (77) each from both Fil-and-Am Divisions play one round apiece at Baguio Country Club and Camp John Hay.

A total of 720 players from 72 teams, including 25 from abroad, are vying in the biggest edition of the event.

With a report from Frank Cimera, PM Northern bureau Baguio

LUCKY 13! Where Laranang holed his ace. TOTO CABRAL/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQ.

Matan on target . . .

From page A-1

seniors, bodybuilding, basketball, chess, judo and tennis who are vying in Hi-Club Mlab.

"It's a good start for us," said archery team manager Ligaya Mercado, who hoped for good results or condition would continue until today's final qualifying round.

Two other Filipino archers—Hilario Cordero and Arnold Bajao—ranked sixth and seventh with 288 and 284 points, respectively.

Indian Olympian Jennifer Chan compiled 649 points in the 70- and 60-meter events to clinch in third in the women's division, behind Malaysia's three Rodes (a P Sar Tri (660) and Indonesia's Rina Dewi Puspita Sari (656).

Three other ISP archers—Rachelle Anne Cabral, Genevie Higueras and Jessie C. Tabong—finished eighth, 13th and 18th with 622, 617 and 612, respectively.

The women shoot in the 50- and 30-meter distances to determine the top 16 who will make it to the knockout round.

Hassan and the other male competitors were still vying in the 90-meter event as press time yesterday. They're also slated to do in the 50- and 30-meter events today.

It was a remarkable water polo debut for the Filipinos, who were soundly beaten by the Singaporeans, 20-0, nine years ago in the SEA Games in Kuala Lumpur.

The Filipinos try to bounce back in the six-game series today when they face Vietnam at 10:30 a.m.

Coach Galang hopes to beat the Vietnamese and stay on track for a medal. The Filipinos will have to face Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, in that order.

Anthony's answer

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

THE 54TH Fil-Am Golf Invitational is no different from its previous 53 editions except that this year, the tournament, which was tried for its unsullied prestige, is reaping the fruits of robust transfusions introduced mainly by Anthony de Leon some years back.

The tournament was losing a bit of its luster until Anthony de Leon took over as acting chairman of the Baguio Country Club in 1999. With his surrender, technically because this ex-club beginning in 1999 of the Fil-Am, undoubtedly the country's most admired amateur has tournament held annually in the City of Pines. It was a position that became Anthony's rebirth to restoring the Fil-Am's old grandeur and gallery.

"I had observed that the tournament was lost sliding into the pits," said Anthony, who, as 24-year-old, became the youngest matrix elected tournament manager(s) of the Baguio Country Club in 1999. "When I got my promotion in 1999, I immediately thought of ways to bring back the old glory of the Fil-Am."

First, we got the media back, hang an effective ally of the Fil-Am this way, to the late blasting Barreto, a chief cog since the tournament's birth in 1950.

Second, he removed the seven-day format to a five-day one because of the Fil-Am by soliciting prize body by the tournament winners and raffle giveaways.

Third, he got a professional management group to run the tournament's affairs during the Fil-Am, a group that knows the score than specialists in computerized scoring and collating results.

"This year is really a cause for celebration," said Anthony, who, at age 38 a year ago, became the Country Club's youngest president and manager. "The last time we had four years that I had been deep into the affairs of the tournament, I felt glad that the innovations initiated are now producing wonderful results."

Anthony, of course, admits that the hardest part has always been the sentimental surge of teams wanting to join the Fil-Am. He said a game him on end to turn down applicants.

"My joy in seeing a lot of teams wanting to join is but not without," Anthony said. "But then, we can't help but reduce the once we will encounter major glitches once we overshoot our target. The ideal thing really is for teams 36 have 72 teams over but then, that's the most that we can handle. We said seeing among some other teams and I hope they understand."

Anthony is optimistic he would soon find the answer, if not the solution, to this ever-nagging problem of an ever-bloc crowd in the Fil-Am. In fact, he already has one formula in mind.

"We are now seriously considering holding a separate senior division some year," he said. "With that, we could probably extend the Fil-Am to two weeks, giving the Fil-Am to two weeks, giving the tournament timeline as late Dominguez sounds are concerned. The plans are silent and I hope we can work it out beginning, maybe, next May."

My advice, Anthony!

Go for it. When the product is good, there's no way but go.

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SPORTSWATCH

Tams assert UAAP mastery, rip Knights

THE UAAP Lauren Tams again crowned the division yesterday. The reigning UAAP champions stamped their class over their NCAA counterparts, blasting the Letran Knights, 69-61, yesterday in the fight sixteen of the Champions' League at the Ateneum gym. With the win, FEU set up a final four clash with the University of Santo Tomas on a rematch of last year's thrilling fight when the Tamaraws downed the Tigers. So dominant were the Tamaraws that the Letran Knights could get more at 19-25, the score at the end of first quarter. "I think we caught them in an off-day," said winning coach Eric Bachal. I attribute their off-form to the fact that they had to play the NCAA twice in the morning. The fact of the matter is that we are the best in the UAAP." Tamaraw's Kelly Cross of Ghana — are playing out of position since with the absence Godsey the reading Diego.

Scores:

FEU 69— Ivy V. Santos 13, Dan H. Miranda 9, Frank E. Dino 6, Jason E. Salazar 5, Ryan J. Sandalo 0.

LETRAN 61— Ronie D. Tiburcio 18, Jaime S. Ruben P. Abut 3, Rodrick J. Pinto 2, Ryan J. Ramos 2, Raymond C. Sandoval 1, Rodriguez 0.

Quarters: 25-11, 36-29, 52-42, 69-61

Arcilla reaffirms No. 1 ranking

JOHNNY Arcilla bested up to his billing as the country's No. 1 player last Sunday by winning the PAGCOR Invitational Update Tennis Masters Cup at the Manila Polo Club. Playing true to form, the 23-year-old Manila bowled past Joseph Victoria, 6-0, 6-2, for his 10th singles title this year. "I'm happy to win again," said Arcilla, whose more title victory was snapped last week by the PCA Open finals. "I was very disappointed after losing to Kareem Chiang Hao-Sieh in the PCA final. I told myself that I have to regain my confidence and show my best to win the Masters leg." Arcilla, who won the No. 1 ranking in the Nat'l Rankings of the Philippine Tennis Federation, Inc. (PTFI) after the PCA Open, also teamed with Victoria to capture the doubles crown and collect P10,000 in prize money.

FEU, UST shutters forge title clash

FEU Tamaraws and UST Tigers will meet in the finals of the Philippine Basketball Association Tournament. Both teams scored victories in the semifinals of the Philippine Basketball Association Tournament yesterday at the Araneta Coliseum. The Tamaraws defeated the Tigers, 69-61, in the first game of the double-header. Ivy Santos led the Tamaraws with 13 points, while Jason Salazar added 12 points and 10 rebounds. The Tigers were led by Ronie Tiburcio with 18 points. The Tamaraws will face the Tigers in the finals on Wednesday.

Abas is rightful Off-Roader awardee

UPDATED 12:00 PM The 2003 Mike Kondo Nat'l Motocross Series has come to an end with the crowning of Abas Jr. as the rightful awardee. Abas was declared the winner after the Philippine Motorcycle Federation (PMF) conducted a review of the results of the 2003 Mike Kondo Nat'l Motocross Series. The review was conducted after it was discovered that there was an error in the scoring of the points of Abas Jr. in the 2003 Mike Kondo Nat'l Motocross Series. The error was discovered by Abas Jr. himself. Abas Jr. had 1,250 points, while Ramos had 1,200 points. The PMF has declared Abas Jr. as the rightful awardee. Abas Jr. will receive the trophy and the cash prize of P50,000. Ramos will receive the runner-up trophy and the cash prize of P25,000.

Sta. Ana cockpit 3-cock derby today

GAME fowls totaling P100,000 await the winners of a 3-cock derby today at the Sta. Ana Cockpit Arena (next to Sta. Ana Public Market) in Makati City. Action starts at 1 p.m. The event, to be hosted by Eliseo Soto, has an entry fee of P1,000, with a minimum bet of P1,000. All bets are set to be collected before the derby starts. For more information, you can call 896-4414 and 896-2415. PR manager Eric del Rosario announced the holding of the "Isabel Elizalde Soto Derby" last Saturday. The total guaranteed prize is P100,000, with a consolation fee of P1,000. Meanwhile, the first-ever National Press Club Challenge 3-Cock derby unfurls on Dec. 13. A stake is on each prize of P100,000. Entry fee is P5,000.

RP 13 Category winners Eric Camarillo and Alan Morales (1st and 2nd from left) of Duncan Racing School stand next to their Ford Lynx after taking the runner Puerto Rella Filipinas. With them are runners-up Melissa Santiago (3rd from left) and Jay Navarro of Team DHR

Across the NATION
Assistant Editor Tony Burgonio

Convict calls shots in town polls

ZAMBOANGA CITY—Though behind bars in the National Penitentiary in Muntinlupa, former Zamboanga del Norte Rep. Bronson Jalosjos still calls the shots in his province as far as politics is concerned.

The Alliance of Parties for Progress (APP), which was founded by Jalosjos last year and which he currently chairs, has 21 out of 27 Zamboanga del Norte municipal mayors and two incumbent congressmen under its wing.

In the coming 2004 elections, these Jalosjosmen are vying for different elective positions in Zamboanga del Norte—incumbent Rep. Cecilia Jalosjos-Carreon for the first district of the province, Cesar Jalosjos for the third district and Dominador Jalosjos Jr. for mayor of the city of Dapitan.

Another Jalosjos ward is incumbent Rep. Romeo Jalosjos Jr. for governor of Zamboanga del Norte," an APP member told the Inquirer.

What promises to be an exciting match is the congressional bout between Romy's younger brother, Crost, and Zamboanga Norte's third district political kingpin Rep. Angel Cardino.

Cardino, who had been ruling his turf of 12 towns in the past 13 years, is reportedly the underdog as the younger Jalosjos, once romantically linked to actress Gabriel Luciano, has eight municipal mayors supporting his congressional bid.

The local executives come from the usually politics-shy Liloy, Labason, Polanco, Salug, Godod, Labason, Dapitan, Siocon and Sibuco.

Cardino's sister, Dr. Leandro Cardino Labistan, who retired from the government service as the director of the Department of Health for Western Mindanao, is running for mayor of Godod.

But the lessons learned that Labistan's opponents are playing government.

Cesar Jalosjos has anchored his campaign on the development of the tourism industry in his district and upliftment of the economic condition of the place.

A sister, Rep. Cecilia Jalosjos Carreon, is expected to voluntarily Carreon-recorded her jailed brother, Romeo, to spend re-election bid it—he said when she removed three other candidates.

Her husband, Isidro Carreon, is the incumbent mayor of Dapitan City who will give way to another Jalosjos, Dominador Jalosjos Jr. Kelly A. San Juan, PDI Mindanao Bureau

MASS GRAVE
A man throws earth at a pile of wooden caskets said to contain the remains of at least 49 people, most of them believed to be victims of summary executions, during a mass burial Nov. 28 in Zamboanga City. Authorities said the victims' remains had been left decomposing in mortuaries in the city.

2 South Korean traders killed

CEBU CITY—Two South Korean businessmen were shot dead by three unidentified armed men on Kinam-ay-ay-ay

Meralco to collect ₱2B from rate hike

Front page A1

"The number is already based on a conservative estimate of kilowatt-hour sales in 2003. The agenda is clearly profit-making more than anything else. As the screaming and it the consumer who has to carry the increasing burden of high power rates, especially during the holiday season, "Sison said.

But Meralco officials said no consumers from the increase would affect its revised tariff petition, which is now up for decision before the Supreme Court decision last year halting the company from passing on to customers any income tax payments since 1994.

Meralco vice president for corporate communications Ramon Ang said the increase was supported by the Lopez family's SM-CIBI Infrastructure Investment Fund, which would not consume on the issue because he had nothing to do with Meralco's multibillion-peso refund to consumers, which is now up for decision before the Supreme Court.

Sen. Sotero Laurel, who is also known as "Kabayan," denounced himself from the increase granted Meralco.

"What can I say?" said Dr. Garcia in an ambush interview in the Senate.

The senator, whose candidacy in 2001 was supported by the Lopez family's SM-CIBI Infrastructure Investment, said he could not comment on the issue because he had nothing to do with Meralco, which is also owned by the Lopezes.

Asked whether the increase was one of the conditions sought for by the Lopezes for allowing a GMA-Kabayan tandem in 2004, he said: "No. Sore yes. None."

He was emphatic in saying there was no deal between the Lopezes and President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Dr. Garcia declined to say if he had yet to have a one-on-one meeting with the President. "We have yet to talk."

Citing an unimpeachable source, Bribe confirmed earlier a GMA-Kabayan tandem in 2004 as one of the deal to bail out the Lopez business empire from its economic woes in exchange for Dr. Garcia not seeking the presidency. Mr. Macapagal would allegedly help the Lopez Group by selling "share for shares and Benpres Holdings to recover their losses through preferential investments. With reports from Aileen Rojo, Michael Lim Ubac and Reuters

PRESIDENT Macapagal shows a letter of support from the Association of Chiefs of Police during its 5th National Convention at the Manila Hotel. PNP Director General Hermogenes Ebdane, NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco, Gov. Arturo Lomibao and Gen. Ricardo de Leon welcomed the President. AL ANCHETA

FPJ won't submit to selection process

From page A1

Poe, who is down with the flu, absent the meeting.

"We're looking at his schedule and, hopefully, he will meet before by today and in the next few days we would be able to iron out his schedule," the source told reporters.

Some said he was not sure if Poe would be available on Dec. 3.

Lacson said he was willing to meet with Poe. "What is important is that we talk and we resolve the issue," he told reporters.

Some advised a note of urgency saying he wanted "to settle the matter as early as possible."

But Jinggoy Estrada said he was not worried because the two camps had met only last week and that Poe was supposed to announce the decision on the 12th.

"If not, he could not announce on the time because he had nothing to do with Morales, which is already in the Lopezes.

Asked whether the increase was one of the conditions sought for by the Lopezes for allowing a GMA-Kabayan tandem in 2004, he said: "No. Sore yes. None."

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Protests

Bayan is set to meet with other movement groups this week to plan protest and legal actions against the rate increase.

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Reasonable rate

"We asked for this rate increase to get a reasonable rate of return for our investments and not because we need money for the re-bond," Francisco said.

In an earlier dated Nov. 27, the SEC told Meralco to explain why its request for a rate increase should not be denied in the absence of major capital projects (such as shortline lines and substations) ... is well taken."

"The inability of Meralco to construct much-needed capital projects to meet its customers' growing demand and, at the same time, ensure reliability and efficiency of its existing system would ultimately be to the prejudice of the consumers," the SEC said.

Meralco officials said the firm had delivered 42 such projects over the last five years. From 1999 to August this year, Meralco had set aside P25.29 billion in capital expenses or P4.8 billion less than the projected P30.1 billion.

"On the average, we are spending 40 percent less than we think we should to meet customer demand," Francisco said.

Meralco said independent results tallying agency Standard and Poor's had downgraded its rating from times within the year. The rating currently stands at "A-," which is below investment ratings.

Erap allies split between Ping, FPJ

By Michael Lim Ubac

EVEN FORMER officials Alexander Aguirre and deposed President Joseph Estrada are split between opposition candidates Fernando Poe Jr. and Sen. Panfilo "Ping" Lacson.

Manny Pangan, chair of the Presidium, Peace and Justice (PAJ) Movement, said those supporting Poe were former Finance Secretary Jose Pardo, former National Economic and Development Authority Chair Felipe Medalla, former Agrarian Reform Secretary Ernesto Garilao and Aguirre, and a group of University of the Philippines economists and public administration professors led by Dr. Raul de Guzman, Estrada's brother in-law.

Others said businessman Edgardo "Sandy" Cojuangco's Nacionalist People's Coalition was also supporting Poe, together with personalities from "other political parties."

He identified former Gov. Raul Daza of the Liberal Party, former Gov. Alexander Padilla, Federation of Reporma, Bukidnon Gov. Jose Ma. Zubiri of Lanao del Norte, Agusan del Norte Rep. Jacinto Paras of Lakas-CMD, and former Agusan del Norte Rep. Charito Plaza of Reporma.

"This means that a conglomeration of members of all political groups in their individual capacity as politicians are going for FPJ," Pastor said.

But the Lacson camp claimed the support of Estrada's "Ingle boys."

Rep. Ronaldo Zamora, Estrada's executive secretary and several members of the House of Representatives from the LDP and the PMP were behind Lacson.

As for Estrada's Cabinet men, Zamora identified former Secretaries Benjamin Abalos, Alberto Romulo, Bienvenido Laguesma, and even Felipe Medalla as members of Lacson's economic team.

As for the unconditional support of the influential Chinese community, he said: "I hope so. But we don't just bank on any one part to take sides. Obviously, we have to have a presidency that is based on as many sectors as possible."

Bid sources in the Lacson camp confirmed that the Estrada-based Chinese were solidly behind Lacson, whose key partners in the answers in the recurring years and other senators.

Zamora said that of the eight or nine largest partners, "five of them have already committed to me."

Defensor: GMA's new 'guy-to-ask'

Front page A1

regular source of media reports, was "speaking on his own," he said.

"As of now, the only authorized spokespersons of the President are Secretary (Ignacio) Bunye and (Cabinet Secretary Alexander) Aguilar. All the others are not probable to speak on behalf of the President. So Secretary Ahmee is speaking on his own behalf and not for the President," Defensor said.

Defensor, one of Mr. Macapagal's most trusted aides, defined his position as that of a spokesperson "I will be speaking on the total campaign, not only on the President but on the all-front political issues that would be arising from the political exercise."

Mr. Macapagal also appointed Philippine Star columnist Ahmee de Magsin as deputy campaign spokesperson for the second week.

Bunye, her spokesperson, pronounced Defensor yesterday as blundering reporters as the "guy to ask" on all political matters concerning the President and her candidacy.

Asked what has happened to the President's advisers on political affairs Bernard Bergonia, Bunye replied: "The reason why we're making Secretary Defensor available on a full-time basis is so that the problem of media pressure bearing is get a quick reaction."

Coalition ticket

Asked why Mr. Macapagal tapped a member of the Liberal Party instead of someone from her own Lakas party, Bunye said "the message is there that this will be a coalition ticket."

Defensor said the administration aims to hint meeting to consolidate its coalition with its old allies and was looking for a new coalition name.

He said the LP and "some members" of Reporma and the Nationalist People's Coalition remained with the administration. Former Rep. Oscar Orbos of Reporma, the PNP boss, was "with us" even though his party headed by Senator de Villa, had joined the People Power Coalition along with Sen. Roco's Aksyon Demokratiko and Emilio "Erin" Osmeña's Pwersa ng mga.

The three smaller parties have banded together to form Roco's "Winner of Hope."

Defensor said 15 NPC members, including Eastern Samar Rep. Marcelino Libanan and former Speaker Arnulfo Fuentebella, the father of Rep. Mingo Fuentebella, had joined the administration.

Defensor said Pimentel, the name of the coalition," Defensor said.

He said the Wednesday group of Senators Juan Ponce Enrile, Manuel Villar, Francis Pangilinan, Ralph Recto and Noli de Castro was also included in the coalition.

Defensor said the administration was now in the middle of screening its candidates for vice president and senator.

He said the criteria for selection included integrity, "winnability" based on surveys and performance, and track record.

He said the candidates would be named in mid-December.

Defensor named Senators Robert Barbers and Dr. Castro, Senate President Franklin Drilon, Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Manuel Bonoan, Tourism Secretary Richard Gordon, Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II and even opposition leader Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. as among those being considered Mr. Macapagal's running mate.

Campaign tidbits

Defensor also disclosed tidbits about Mr. Macapagal's campaign, including the campaign color and an upcoming jingle.

"We have not decided on the color, but if you noticed, the President wears blue in the campaign. Royal blue—that's the color. I think the President is more comfortable with," Defensor said.

Mr. Macapagal has explained that she wears clothes in powder blue because it is a color associated with the Virgin Mary.

What kind signal will Mr. Macapagal's campaign use? Defensor said they had not thought of one yet.

But Defensor said the Philippine flag would not have a prominence in the campaign because Mr. Macapagal was not just a candidate but also the incumbent President.

Peso rallies amid political uncertainties

Front page A1

On Friday, the peso closed at a new all-time low of P55.73. On Monday, the peso closed at P55.60 after falling to a historic intraday low of P55.95, largely in reaction to the announcement of movie actor Fernando Poe Jr. that he was running in the presidential election in May next year.

Analysts said the central bank has not spotted any speculative activity in the foreign exchange market which usually accompanied the peso's tailspin in the past.

"The exchange rate is in the grey or black market is not far off from the spot market rate," he said. "During periods of volatility, the BSP is always there to monitor everybody's activity. It is not just now that we are doing this."

The central bank monitors the inter-bank market, particularly the so-called Bloomberg Central Bank, during times of volatility to check whether the differential between the two rates is substantial.

Stabilizing

"I think the peso should start stabilizing given that most of the noise had already somewhat undercut, we should have no surprises. We are seeing more inflows than outflows at this point," he said.

Banko Sentral said an expected improvement in export receipts in the last two months of the year and a rise in foreign portfolio investments in the country should also lift the peso.

Exports rose 2.3 percent in the year to September, with electronics shipments—the make up about two-thirds of overall exports—up for the first time in six months.

Bureaucrats said dollar remittances from millions of overseas Filipino workers—mostly nurses, caregivers, seafarers, domestic helpers and entertainers—also were expected to rise 4 percent this year from $7.2 billion in 2002.

The government originally estimated remittances would not grow this year due to the long wait that businessmen said dollar remittances from the OFWs should hit $8 billion in 2004 thanks to the improving global economy.

The central bank governor said a peso currency in the 54 level by year-end would be very difficult. "It would probably stay where it is, it's not better," he said.

Businessmen said the peso should be trading at about 52-53 to the dollar were it not for the political turmoil.

Traders, however, said the peso could weaken to 56 to the dollar with another major political development.

Technical analysis

In the last two weeks, the peso had been adversely affected by the resignation of Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho, warning from Moody's Investors Service that it could downgrade the country's credit rating, and Poe's presidential bid.

Despite breaking new ground in the end of the three-week downtrend, analysts said momentum indicators such as the Relative Strength Index (RSI) and Stochastic Oscillator showed a bullish bias for the dollar against the peso.

"Dollar pairs should [only] begin steadily toward 56 in the medium term," said Eric Tee Keng, a technical analyst with OANDA Global.com.

He said the monthly chart showed two consecutive white candles, which supported that peso bearish view, and that the dollar appears to have found support at 55 and through the 55.50 level last week.

Eddie Pellin, a technical strategist at ING Barings in London, said a channel projection on the chart showed the peso could head toward a 56.50 target in about two months.

But there's nothing to surprise if investors to suggest that a turnaround is happening," he said.

Unless the peso rallied past a support zone around 55.30, in which it had spent three months since August, and started toward a medium-term resistance at 53.81, Pellin said he saw no risk to his bearish peso outlook. With a report from Reuters

METRO

E-mail us: metro@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Alejandro S. Ulanday

More road diggings suspended

By Margaux Ortiz

THERE will be no more road diggings this Christmas season.

Metro Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando yesterday announced that his agency has stopped issuing permits for new excavations in national and local roads.

He said that with the moratorium on road diggings, which began yesterday and will end on Jan. 2, they hope to ensure smoother traffic flow during the holidays.

"Ongoing road projects could however be completed," Fernando said. "What we are banning is the 'breaking' of roads and pavements."

Fernando said that people caught violating the moratorium would be fined up to P20,000. He also said that the excavation equipment of violators will be impounded, while corresponding charges will be filed against them in court.

ROADWORK. Be it the monstrous eyesore on Ortigas Avenue (formerly Flavong Tuloy) Ave. in Pasig City, will be put on hold for the holidays, according to the MMDA. (PHOTO BY LYN RILLON)

Marikina cops caught in NBI, PDEA clash

THE MARIKINA police appear to be caught between two feuding giants—the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency.

Neither the NBI nor the PDEA seemed fortunate to cooperate in the investigation of the shooting of Marvin Manuntag, a cookie bill agent, on Nov. 22, Marikina investigators yesterday said.

Insp. Antonio Cruz of the city police said they would formally ask NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco to allow Manuntag to file a complaint against the PDEA men in the case could move on.

He said the PDEA has also sent an internal affairs service officer to look into the "administrative aspect" of the case.

But like the NBI agents, the Marikina lawmen wielded unnecessary information from their rivals, sources said.

PDEA agents' P50 Shoreline Bukas and 000 (Operation Anti-Lam mula) surrendered to the police and admitted that they shot the NBI rookie. Luige del Puerto

Police seize shabu worth P6M in Malate bust

POLICE on Saturday seized about P6-million worth of shabu from an alleged drug dealer in Manila.

Supt. Ellaraldino Bolcena Jr. said members of the Western Police District's Special Operations Group arrested Jeffrey Andrips, 25, of Barangay San Vicente, Paranaque City in a buy-bust operation on Remedios Street, in Malate, at around 7 p.m. Andrips was caught with three kilos of shabu placed in sealed plastic bags.

Policers said Andrips tried to make a run for it, speeding away on board a black Toyota Estate (UEC 888), but lacerna caught the suspect on Remedios Street.

Andrips had been under surveillance for two weeks, according to Bolcena. Tarra Quismundo

Water cutoff in Malabon

MALABON Congressman Jesus Sy Bodet in Malabon will have no water for 7 hours starting 10 p.m., Dec. 3, until 5 a.m. of the following day.

A portion of Barangay Catmon San Agustin will also experience low water pressure.

Affected consumers may call Maynilad's hotline 1626 for the water-rationing schedule.

UP PDE reunion

ALUMNI of the Program in Development Economics of the University of the Philippines School of Economics will be host to his Annual Reunion dubbed as PDE Tomorrow Once More on Dec. 5, at 2:00 p.m. at the UPSE Library Building.

For details, call the UP-PDE at 928-5401 and 927-8680 or 92 c/o Irma or any PDE alumni officer.

Rodeo action

WILD rodeo action will unfold in Manila when the Department of Tourism launches the 1st National Rodeo Competition, one of the special events of Visit Philippines 2003, on Dec. 3 to 4 at the Quirino Grandstand.

A grand parade of participants is scheduled at 4 p.m. on opening day, followed by the competition proper at 5 p.m.

Ecija HS reunion

MEMBERS of Nueva Ecija Batch Class '50 will hold their 53th anniversary reunion in Cuipas, Nueva Ecija, on April 24, 2004. For details, call Eugene Garcia at 890-0170 Vita 7950, Nes Figueroa-Arellano (0917) 631-5440, Cecilia Espinosa (0917) 807-8081, or Nena Pedlar-Cruz (0920) 704-1208.

Sale of mental health land set by government

MENTAL anguish is expected to deepen after the government set the bidding date for the land on which the National Center for Mental Health (NCMH) stands.

Despite protests by NCMH personnel and other health workers, Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit said bids for Parcel 2 of the 100-hectare Welfareville compound in Mandaluyong should be held on Jan. 7.

Parcel 2 covers 29 hectares on the west side of Welfareville, where the Department of Transportation and Communications, Department of Health-National Capital Region, Commission on Population, and some 14,000 squatters are located.

The bidding for Parcel 1, which covers the remaining 71 hectares where the NCMH and the Correctional Institute for Women stand, will be held a week later on Jan. 12.

Protesters are saying that the sale of the hospital land would violate the displacement of 2,000 employees and 4,000 to patients. Marichu Rivera

Sure, Ping could stop crime in 180 days!

ON TARGET
Ramon Tulfo

PRESIDENTIAL aspirant Fred Revilla was preemptorious when he said he and his supporters would storm Malacañang if he were cheated at the polls.

He made the statement when he declared his candidacy at the Rizal Arts Theater Sunday. How sure is Revi that he's going to win?

* * *

At this point, it's anybody's ballgame.

Nobody may be leading in the recent surveys, but between now and May 2004, many things are going to happen. Don't be too sure of yourself, Mr. Revi!

* * *

Apparently sub-scraping the tennis, the former senator and education secretary said that Filipinos have such dignity and principles they could not be bought.

Aw, cmon, Fred! How come we have crossovers in Congress and the local government? They could not have won if they didn't pay off voters. An undeserved compliment is an insult. Revi was being sarcastic with his listeners.

* * *

I agree 100 percent with Senator Rod Reyes's a need to educate the Filipinos.

Voting for candidates on account of their popularity and money is a sign of lack or no education on the part of voters.

That's why we have a nonsensical, pandering and drumbeat campaign that's going to last for 7 hours starting 10 p.m., Dec. 3, until 5 a.m. of the following day.

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2003 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B1

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E-mail: [redacted] Website: [redacted]

Editor Raul D. Mercado
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Gov't to tap foreign loan market anew

By Clarissa S. Balleo

THE MACAPAGAL administration is reconsidering another foreign borrowing possibly in January to complete the government's $1.6-billion financing requirement for 2004, according to the Department of Finance.

The government needs to raise some billion of its requirement for next year after successfully pretunding $1 billion of the amount.

"We could take advantage of the market and borrow as circumstances allow. The spreads remain good so we are closely watching the markets," said Finance Undersecretary Juanita Amatong, who was tapped by Makati ang to replace resigned Finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho.

Inquirer sources said new offers for the government to tap the foreign market by January had been submitted to the DOF. The cash-strapped National Power Corp. is also poised to issue new debt instruments or finance its $1.2-billion requirement for next year.

Amatong said any borrowing would have to be long-term, similar to the government's earlier transactions when it raised $1.05 billion from the 10-year and 25-year bond markets in October.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura said he welcomed any foreign borrowing by the national government, saying that it would be better for the DOF to raise its remaining requirements before the May presidential polls.

"The national government has a familiar authority to tap the foreign markets anytime. We have approved their foreign borrowings in principle," the BSP governor said.

But market players said spreads on Philippine bond issues have widened by more than 50 basis points since Camacho announced his resignation on Nov. 21.

The spread represents the risk premium that investors seek for placing their money in Philippine bonds.

Days later, spreads went up a few notches more following the announcement of action star Fernando Poe Jr. that he would run in the May presidential polls. That was on the same day that Moody's Investors Service warned of an impending credit rating downgrade.

Camacho had resisted to raise the government's remaining requirement after the May elections, but sources said the strategy could easily change under Amatong's leadership.

On top of political jitters that are making Philippine borrowings more expensive, the rate on US treasuries had been going up as well. Investment banks believed that US treasury rates would continue to go up next year.

The government also said it would continue to tap the local market for funds. It is currently selling three-year retail treasury bonds where it aims to raise at least P30 billion. The public offering for the RTBs would end today.

Meanwhile, Napocor said yesterday it planned to issue $250 million in bonds in the first quarter of 2004 to fund its operations and pay back debt.

Napocor finance manager Lucita Ysrael reporters that the firm, which owns many of the country's power plants, was in talks with investment firm ING on issuing the bonds.

"There's a $250-million bond issuance in the offing," Ysrael said, adding details of the plan would be finalized this week.

Other officials said Napocor has yet to firm up how much it needed next year after raising $1.2 billion this year to fund its operations and pay outstanding debt. With a report from Reuters

Currencies

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 55.53 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 01, 2003

¥ 100.31 = $1
As of 5 p.m., Dec. 01, 2003

OCTOBER NOVEMBER

GOLD: $396.30/t.oz.
per Loco London, Dec. 01, 2003

December 1, 2003

Country	Unit	Peso Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	55.5300	1.0000	55.5300
Australia	Dollar	39.0000	0.7025	39.0000
United Kingdom	Pound	1.7500	1.7500	97.1775
Hongkong	Dollar	7.1800	0.1293	7.1800
Switzerland	Franc	43.0000	0.7748	43.0000
Canada	Dollar	41.9000	0.7550	41.9000
Singapore	Dollar	32.6000	0.5874	32.6000
Japan	Dollar	0.4917	0.0089	0.4917
Bahrain	Dinar	147.3900	2.6550	147.3900
Saudi Arabia	Riyal	14.7900	0.2664	14.7900
Kuwait	Dinar	181.0000	3.2613	181.0000
Malaysia	Ringgit	14.6000	0.2630	14.6000
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.0068	0.0001	0.0068
Thailand	Baht	1.3000	0.0234	1.3000
UAE	Dirham	15.1200	0.2724	15.1200
Iran	Iran		0.0014	0.0014
Argentina	Peso	19.4000	0.3495	19.4000
Brazil	Real	19.2000	0.3459	19.2000
Denmark	Krone	8.2000	0.1477	8.2000
India	Rupee	1.2000	0.0216	1.2000
Malaysia	Ringgit	14.6000	0.2630	14.6000
Mexico	New Peso	5.0000	0.0901	5.0000
New Zealand	Dollar	34.0000	0.6126	34.0000
Norway	Krone	7.5000	0.1351	7.5000
Pakistan	Rupee	0.9000	0.0162	0.9000
South Africa	Rand	7.9000	0.1423	7.9000
Korea	Won	0.0400	0.0007	0.0400
Sweden	Krona	6.1000	0.1099	6.1000
Syria	Pound	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000
Taiwan	NT Dollar	1.6000	0.0288	1.6000
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000

Stock Market

Shares close 0.56% higher

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

(See stock market report on Page B4)

Shares of SMC prices closed 0.08 percent higher yesterday as added bullishness stirred a decision after recent declines and as the peso steadied, dealers said.

They said sentiment improved on the peso's recovery after hitting an all-time low of 55.85 against the US dollar on Thursday against a backdrop of increasing political tensions ahead of next year's presidential elections.

At the same time, gains in Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) and parent First Philippine Holdings following regulatory approval for a Meralco rate increase also gave the market a boost.

However, despite the positive start for the week, dealers said the vulnerability of the stocks remained uncertain as investors would continue to factor in political uncertainties in the run-up to the May presidential polls.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index added 7.39 points to 1,331.35, having traded between 1,314.43 and 1,339.65.

Gainers led losers 77 to 51, while 40 stocks were unchanged.

The all-shares index was up 1.24 points at 843.89 while the commercial-industrial index rose by 12.12 at 1,870.24.

Property was down 3.18 at 640.35, while mining rose 40.08 at 1,620.37 and oil was unchanged at 1.33. Banking and financial services gained 1.48 points to 418.64.

"The market staged a technical rebound, helped by positive developments overturning the gains to recovery against the dollar," said Nestor Aguila of SM Market Securities.

"Meralco's rate hike approval also helped to lift the key index."

Top traded Meralco "B" , open to foreign investors, added a peso to P32.75 while Meralco "A" gained 11 centavos to P14.11. First Philippine Holdings was up 75 centavos at P18.25. SMC Preferred A1 increased by P0.40.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) rose P20 to P1,160 as its dispute with 65 carriers over termination fees for calls landing in the Philippines appeared to be nearing an end. Ayala Corp. added five centavos to P4.80. AFP

Debt yields fall, banks watch retail bonds

Bill rates on government bonds fell by between 10 and 30 basis points in the secondary market yesterday as some sales returned following a week marked by rising economic and political concerns.

Most banks were waiting for the result of a public offering of retail bonds that were issued in the market last week, traders said.

"Right now, market players are waiting to see how much the government raises from the issuance of retail bonds before taking positions on the secondary market," one trader said.

The government's rejection of most offers at last Thursday's auction of retail bonds took the market by surprise.

Players had expected the government would accept an average rate of up to 10.25% percent for the bonds, the proceeds from which would be used to partly fund the government's budget deficit in 2004.

And the Bureau of Treasury threw out the bulk of bids, awarding just P1.24 billion worth of the paper at a coupon rate of 10 percent, from tenders totaling P5.76 billion.

The lower-than-expected coupon rate on the retail bonds was one reason for the fall in secondary rates, traders said.

The Treasury said retail bonds would be offered to the public until Dec. 5. Treasurer Sergio Leoncio had previously said he hoped the government could raise between P20 billion and P30 billion from the auction and public offering.

Analysts said the market had concentrated in the resignation of finance Secretary Jose Isidro Camacho and the concerns questioned over by the announcement that actor Fernando Poe Jr., a high school dropout who has never held public office, would run for president. Reuters

Interest Rates

Deposits	
7 Days	6.40%
2 Years	10.25%
3 Years	10.75%
4 Years	10.75%
5 Years	11.25%

Interbank	1-Dec-03	28-Nov-03
Overnight	6.5000	6.5000
1 Month	6.6719	6.7188
3 Months	6.7969	6.8281
6 Months	6.9063	6.9219
1 Year	6.9063	6.9219

Gov't awards ₱5.94B worth of power transmission projects

By Ronnel W. Domingo

STATE-run National Transmission Corp. has awarded to contractors two projects to link island power grids in the Visayas worth P5.94 billion, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez Jr. said yesterday.

During the launch of the National Energy Week celebrations, Perez said the partnership of Japanese firms Sumitomo Corp. and J Power Systems was awarded the $66-million (about P3.74 billion) contract to do the Leyte-Cebu interconnection upgrading project.

"We anticipate loan negotiations to be concluded by the middle of this month," Perez said.

The Japanese firms are in talks with the Japan Bank for International Cooperation on the financing of the project.

Perez also announced that the contract for the $49-million (about P2.2 billion) Cebu-Mactan interconnection project has been awarded.

The official did not name the winning contractor for the submarine transmission line project, saying only that a contract signing would be formalized in the next few weeks.

"This is good news for industrial electricity users located in the Cebu export processing zones," he said.

Sony Ferro Tumaro showed that the upgraded Leyte-Cebu transmission lines were expected to be ready for service as early as December 2004.

The installation of a second 22.3-kilometer underwater transmission line between Leyte and Cebu would give an additional 200 megawatts of energy from Leyte to the Cebu-Negros-Panay (CNP) area.

The added capacity would double the volume of electricity being exported from geothermal energy-endowed Leyte to power-hungry CNP.

Meantime, the Cebu-Mactan project, scheduled for completion by December 2005, aims to bring up the capacity of power transmission from Cebu to Mactan to 200 MW from 80 MW.

The government is stepping up efforts to ensure that a looming power shortage in the Cebu-Negros-Panay grid would be avoided, especially during the holiday season.

Perez said studies that the DOE had undertaken the National Transmission Corp. to start negotiations with independent power producers Dauwens Boars and Aggreko on the possible lease of their power barges and generating units.

"Preventive maintenance of the Visayas transmission lines and power tiling plants were completed correctly in preparation for the season of peak demand in December," Perez said.

The official said the National Electrification Administration had also been contracted to prod distribution utilities to negotiate with other generators for additional supply.

VIPS GRACE NISSAN 350Z LAUNCH
Nissan Motor Philippines Inc. president and CEO Lourdes Lee (right) welcomes Taiwan's Minister of Economic Affairs Lin Yi-Fu (left) and Ambassador Wu Hsin-Hsing of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office during the launch of the Nissan 350Z, the new sports car of Nissan. Yulon Motor Corp., the mother company of Nissan, is the biggest automotive company based in Taiwan.

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Cyber Bay makes final appeal on reclamation deal

By Doris C. Dumlao

CYBER Bay Reclamation Development Corp. has not given up hope that the Supreme Court would reverse its decision to nullify its development contract with the Philippine Estate Authority (PEA), but may seek international arbitration if the third and final appeal fails.

In a briefing yesterday, Cyber Bay legal counsel Rustico Roderos Reniers said: "We'd like to believe that the SC will still hear valid and reasonable arguments."

Cyber Bay seeks to really argue its case with the high tribunal, which recognizes third appreciation on eminent domain. Cyber Bay president Peter Sudiarso said the PEA itself was now resigned to the idea that the joint venture covering a 750-hectare reclamation development in Roxas Boulevard could not be won through the judicial borders.

As a last resort, however, the developer-arbitrator has lost its second appeal at the high court—can file a petition to claim damages with the International Chamber of Commerce.

"The arbitration remedy will provide for reimbursement...the right now, we still want the contract upheld," Reniers said.

Reniers said there was no due process in the termination of the joint venture contract between PEA and Cyber Bay after the venture bundled questions on constitutionality he lamented it was nullified because of alleged bribery involved in the deal.

However, he said there was no judicial process involved in determining valuables indeed money changed hands in the forging of the contract, noting that the SC had relied only on a Senate report, which was made on the basis of the original joint venture agreement and not the amended JVA.

"The court totally disregarded the findings of the counterpart Lower House report, which upheld the validity of the amended JVA," Reniers said.

November deficit seen on track

By Clarissa S. Balino

THE MALACAÑANG administration was likely on track in staying within its P148 billion budget deficit ceiling in November as revenues and expenditures appeared to be on target after the government tightened its hold on spending while sustaining improvements in collection.

Caesar Commissioner Antonio Bernardo yesterday said his bureau likely met its P8.84-billion target last month. Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr. said that it had been struggling to meet the P42-billion November target although an agreement with banks for the voluntary payment of back gross receipts taxes could help the bureau achieve the goal.

"I think we will be within striking distance," Mr. "We would not veer away from fiscal discipline. We are committed to work to raise revenues through improved administration," said Finance Undersecretary Aurelio Montemayor, officer-in-charge of the DOF.

Budget Secretary Emilia Boncodin said they continued to be some problems with revenue side cash but any spike in spending should have been offset by tighter disbursements.

"It's only a month to go. I think we are very comfortable in meeting the P300-billion deficit target for the year," Boncodin added.

The government must limit its spending to about P72 billion in November and P64 billion this month to meet the deficit targets of P18 billion last month and P11.22 billion in December. In the third quarter, expenditures exceeded the ceiling by P19 billion.

As of October, the gap between revenues and expenditures stood at P165.88 billion or 96 billion lower than the ceiling of P17.88 billion for the 13-month period.

The government is expected to exceed the budget deficit this month by P9 billion due to Malacañang's decision to award an additional P5,000 Christmas cash gift to each of the national government's one million employees, a move that was not included in the fiscal program for the year.

$355-M coal-fired power plant gets funding

By Rosinel W. Dastirigo

THE CONSTRUCTION of a 232-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Mindanao is expected to start immediately with the preparations now ready with the funding for the $355-million (about P9.5 billion) project, Energy Secretary Vincent Perez said.

Perez said State Power Development Corp. signed yesterday the project contract with Sta. Gonal Power Corp. and the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp.

He said a group of banks had agreed to provide the needed financing, including Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein, Standard Chartered, Japan Bank for International Cooperation, Nippon Export and Investment Insurance and Bank of the Philippine Islands.

"We expect the Mindanao coal facility to be on-stream by December of 2006," he said. "The plant is designed to meet the high environmental standards of the government and the World Bank."

State Power is a partnership between Germany's leading independent power producer Steag AG and State Investment Trust Inc. (SIT).

It was this duo formed six years ago as a bidding for the contract with Napocor in 1997.

The Mindanao coal plant is now to replace certain oil-fired power plants and add to the generating capacity in the island.

Also, the coal-fired facility is expected to mitigate the impact of unpredictable water inventories and the resulting volatility in dependable generating capacity from the hydro power plants.

Records from the Department of Energy show that a debilitating supply shortage is expected to occur in Mindanao by 2006, the same year that the Mindanao coal plant is scheduled for commercial operation.

Perez noted that Mindanao had been experiencing economic growth as evidenced by the 14 percent increase in Napocor's electricity sales in the first half of this year.

CCBPI names new president

COCA-Cola Bottlers Philippines Inc., the soft drink bottling unit of San Miguel Corp., recently named Roberto N. Huang as its new president, succeeding Gerardo Lopez.

In a statement yesterday, SMC said Huang, 55, was the conglomerate's corporate sales director prior to his appointment and had served in various managerial capacities in the group's sales and marketing organization.

Lopez, for his part, resigned from Coca-Cola in order to another company.

As corporate sales director, Huang oversaw the sales operations for SMC's beverage products, including liquor, as well as those for food products.

The new CCBPI chief is a licensed mechanical engineer who graduated from De Manna Institute of Technology. He obtained his masters degree in business administration at the De La Salle University.

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TOYOTA

PDIC readies plan to help banks dispose of NPAs

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Dear Members and Stockholders of Baguio Country Club:

Please be informed that our scheduled December 3, 2003 meeting has been moved as follows:

Date : December 4, 2003

Place : Makati Sports Club

Time : 5:00 p.m.

In the meantime, we wish to inform you of the following:

The supposed "annual stockholders meeting" held last November 6, 2003 was conducted in open defiance of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) resetting the meeting to a later date. Moreover, the aforesaid meeting was not in accordance with the "Status Quo Order" issued by the Court of Appeals.

The SEC disallowed the amendment of the Articles of Incorporation that involves the conversion of our Club to a non-stock corporation.

We shall be discussing the implications of the foregoing as well as other matters.

We look forward to seeing you at that meeting. Bring even more of your friends who are concerned about the affairs of our Club.

Sincerely,

Carlos A. Pedroza
Member 3724

By Elena R. Torrijos

STATE-OWNED Philippine Deposit Insurance Corp. aims to establish a program involving the take-out of billions of pesos worth of non-performing assets—bad loans and foreclosed or acquired property—of troubled banks.

Despite the enactment of the Special Purpose Vehicle Act earlier this year, not a single bank has entered into a master transaction eligible for tax and other incentives provided by the law because of the large losses banks will have to book if they agree to sell the NPAs at the 10.25 percent prior range quoted by foreign investment firms.

"The bad assets, however, have dragged down the profitability of banks and constrained lending.

"We have certain powers which the other entities do not have and we're trying to conceptualize how are we contributor in the reduction of the banking system's NPAs with areas funding arrangements with BSP," Tan said in an interview last week.

No concrete scheme has been drawn up yet but Tan said that among the ideas being floated included the PDIC providing cash of up to 80 percent of the value of NPAs to be sold by a bank.

"We give them the money to get income support for the MBs) and they assign responsory assets here and we pay back the EOP," Tan said. Eventually, PDIC would also be repaid by the bank as well, Tan added.

In a speech before the Chamber of Thrift Banks last Nov. 21, Tan said that PDIC was open to ideas and was soliciting suggestions on how PDIC could help the banks dispose of their NPAs given the provisions of the SPV law and the government's financial institution's own charters.

The charter limits banks eligible for financial assistance to those deemed in danger of shutting down. PDIC's guidelines define such banks as those having a capital-to-risk asset ratio (CAR) of 9 percent to 7 percent but with indications it might fall below 4 percent within six to 11 months and with serious liquidity problems.

Also, Tan said that any scheme would have to take into account burden or gain-sharing between the bank and PDIC and that PDIC assistance should be less expensive than the costs PDIC would incur if the bank were placed under receivership.

As of June 30 this year, the country's over 900 banks had an aggregate past due loans and/or non-performing assets (NPA) of P320 billion and real and other property owned or acquired amounting to P223 billion.

Collapse of RP-S. Korea talks disappoints local airline

By Abigail L. Ho

CONSIDERED OPENLY Cebu Pacific Air expressed disappointment over the collapse of the air talks between the Philippines and South Korea as no additional flights to Seoul would be assumed despite an influx of Korean tourists.

Cebu Pacific vice president for corporate planning and affairs Candy Tengco revealed in an interview over the weekend that the airline was actually ready to assume additional flights to Seoul had more entitlements been granted.

Negotiations for additional Seoul entitlements bogged down Thursday when the South Korean panel refused to grant the Philippine panel's request to change the manner of counting entitlements from frequencies to seats.

Philippine negotiators had pushed for the conversion of entitlements from frequencies to seats so that local airlines would be able to take better advantage of its entitlements despite their lack of wide-bodied jets that their Korean counterparts were using for the Manila-Seoul route.

If smaller aircraft were used for flights to Seoul, Philippine carriers would be able to operate more flights per week if the entitlements were not based instead of frequency-based.

"It is very disappointing for us. We support the Philippine position to pursue the seat formula. But if the Koreans really won't agree, we could still have some additional capacity using whatever formula is acceptable," Tengco said.

An industry source revealed that the Philippine and Korean panels would meet again "at a later date when the Philippine negotiators are ready to talk on frequency."

"We haven't come up with a final date yet, but we'll meet again when we're ready to talk on frequency. The Koreans seem to be taking a hard stance on this. They are sticking with the frequency-based formula," the source said.

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PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES:

December 02, 2003, Tuesday
Focus on SME's

AM Programme
8:00 - 9:00 Opening Ceremonies/Invocation/National Anthem
9:00 - 10:00 Keynote Address : by Atty. Raul S. Roco
10:00 - 10:30 The National SME Agenda - by Undersec. Gregory L. Domingo, DTI
10:30 - 11:00 The Philippine Model for Digitizing SMEs - by Ms. Maria Yaptenco, Pres & CEO, Pix Systems, Inc. & Former UN Consultant
11:00 - 11:15 --- Tea Break ---
11:15 - 11:45 Starting Your E-Business: Basic Steps - by Wilmark Cabaltin, Corporate Sales Manager, Pacific Internet
11:45 - 12:15 --- Open Forum
12:15 - 1:30pm --- Lunch Break ---

PM Programme
1:30 - 2:00 Financing Your E-Business - by Maricio E. Atienza, VP Small Business Dominion & Finance Corp. (SBFPC)
2:00 - 2:30 Essential IP Issues for SMEs - by Atty. Dean Gracia de Vera, PJS Law
2:30 - 3:00 Online Advertising in a Post Borders World - by Ramon D. Lizardo, VP INQ7.net
3:00 - 3:15 --- Tea Break ---
3:15 - 3:45 Case Studies of SME Doing E-Business (Case Number 1)
3:45 - 4:15 Case Number 2
4:15 - 5:00 Open Forum
4:30 - 5:00 Business Consultation

December 03, 2003, Wednesday
Focus on Electronic Payment and Solutions

AM Programme
8:00 - 9:00 Registration
9:30 - 10:15 Electronic payment as a major challenge in the success of e-Business - by Emmanuel Ibañez, Vice President, BPI
10:15 - 10:30 Online Payment Solutions - by Eric J. Sebastian, Director, Sales & Marketing, BancNet
10:30 - 11:00 --- Tea Break ---
11:30 - 12:15 Online Payment Solutions - by Gregorio O. Severino, Assistant VP, Equitable PCI Bank
12:15 - 12:45 Panel Reaction/Open Forum
--- Lunch Break --- (morning turnstile to be served)

PM Programme
1:00 - 1:30 Official Address of Secretary Mar Roxas, Secretary, Department of Trade & Industry (DTI)
1:45 - 2:30 Protection Beyond Firewalls - by Yancy Poteet, Technical Consultant, Computer Associates (CA)
2:30 - 3:15 Wireless Connectivity Technologies - by Manuel Acuna, IT Director, Unilab Group of Companies
3:15 - 3:45 --- Tea Break ---
3:45 - 4:15 Wireless Payment : what's the current buzz? - by Rey S. Tolosa, Sr. Mngr. Bus. Dev. Smart Communications, Inc.
4:15 - 4:30 Open Forum
4:30 - 5:00 Business Consultation

December 04, 2003, Thursday
Focus on Convergent Technologies

AM Programme
8:00 - 8:30 Registration
8:30 - 10:00 Convergent technologies making it affordable for SMEs to do e-business - by Arthur Tan, President, Integrated Microtech Industries (IMI)
10:00-10:30 Leveraging Wi-Fi Technology accessible to SMEs - by Edmund R. Pike, Product Development Manager, Pt.to Pt.
10:30-10:45 --- Tea Break ---
10:45-11:15 Mobility and Wireless solutions in the SME's via portable & handheld computing devices - by Paolo G. Lopez, Head-Bus Dev. Mobile Solutions
11:15-11:45 Hewlett Packard Philippines Inc. Presentation - by Jerrien Wanis L. Wong, Mobile Technologies Manager, Personal Systems Group,HP Philippines Inc.
11:45-12:15 Panel Reaction/Open Forum
12:15-1:30 --- Lunch Break ---

PM Programme
1:30 - 2:00 Transforming the Internet Data into shared access and business solutions center - by Raymond Rodafer, Pres., Digital Paradise Inc.
2:00 - 2:30 Making inventory management more efficient through automation - by Antonio S. Datiles Jr., PLDT
2:30 - 3:00 --- Tea Break ---
3:00 - 3:30 Sales automation using wireless & mobile technologies - by Christopher H. Chang, Head-Technical & Wireless Applications, Otolo Solutions
3:30 - 4:00 Open Forum
4:00 - 5:00 Business Consultation

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BUSINESS

RP, Taiwan move to resolve trade issues

By Abigail L. Ho

THE ZAMBOANGA government is "expected" to the Philippines' request to lower its ban on young coconut exports from the country lifted, Trade Secretary Manuel Roxas II said.

In a statement, Roxas said that a seven-survey conducted by the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA) showed that countries from Laguna, Batangas and Cavite were not infected by the cadang-cadang virus.

The survey ceased to have continued the Taiwanese authorities to lift the ban on Philippine young coconut exports.

The PCA had earlier reported that the cadang-cadang virus was plaguing coconut farms in the Bicol region, parts of Samar and Quezon provinces as well as Eastern Samar.

Because of the contagious nature of the coconut disease, the Taiwanese government imposed a ban on Philippine young coconut exports. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Hong Kong imposed similar bans.

Mr. Roxas said the Taiwanese government had already expressed willingness to lift the ban on coconut exports, at least for young coconuts from Laguna, Batangas and Cavite.

"We will [also] be sending experts to Taipei for deeper discussion with their counterparts to resolve sanitary and phyto-sanitary issues for papaya, mango and

EXPORT OPTION Of coconut to Taiwan hoped to resume soon.

banana from the Philippines," he said.

Also, the Taiwanese government is also working toward considering visa waivers with the Philippine government.

"We are extending business visas from six months to one year while Taiwan will extend visas from one month to six months for [infrastructure technology] professionals on a case-to-case basis. Both sides welcome these developments," Roxas said.

Another issue being considered right now is concerning water rates in the Subic Bay freeport area that Taiwanese businesses had earlier raised.

Roxas said the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, Subic Bay Development and Management Corp. and the Board of Investments would come up with compromise rates as well as agreements on how penalties and interests on past due payables would be paid for by the Taiwanese locators in the area.

From P22 per cubic meter, water rates at the freeport zone are now down to P10 per cubic meter.

Roxas said the ESEMC was also studying a new package for land rental rates, as well as proposing trade-facilitating measures between Subic and Kaohsiung and other Taiwanese free ports.

While moving toward resolving various issues between them, the Philippine and Taiwanese governments had also signed a memorandum of understanding on trade promotion and industrial development cooperation, specifically for major export products.

Roxas said Taiwan had committed support for the country's food processing and semiconductor industries.

Food exporters told to upgrade manufacturing facilities, systems

By Christine A. Gaglicot

THE AGRICULTURE department has urged food exporters to the European Union and the European Union to upgrade their manufacturing systems following the implementation of stricter product standards.

The DA said the US and the EU countries required us to export all food exporters to acquire a Hazard Analysis Control Point (HACCP) certification starting next year.

HACCP aims to minimize and control biological and chemical hazards in food by identifying potential sources of risk in food production, from the sourcing of raw materials to the production process itself.

The Philippines' top agricultural exports to the US and the EU that might be affected by the new product certification requirement include fresh banana, coconut oil, manufactured furniture, pineapple and pineapple products, copra oil, sugar, deodorized coconut, tuna, seaweeds and carrageenan, fresh mangoes and shrimps and prawns.

Among the risks that threaten food safety are the presence of bacteria, viruses, yeast and mold, parasites, pests and insects. Other risks include the cross-contamination of raw and cooked foods during transport, storage, preparation and cooking; inadequate cleaning of equipment; poor standards of personal hygiene and inadequate cooking.

The HACCP certification would cover food manufacturing, food catering and other services, food packing materials and medical devices.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have already adopted HACCP as the basic sanitary standard for food.

The DA, however, estimated that it would cost food food processing firms at least $5,000 annually to secure the HACCP certification, which could be too expensive for small and medium enterprises.

"Most SMEs in the Philippines could not afford this [cost of certification] and we are now working on how they could be financed," the DA said.

Farmers oppose 400% hike in cigarette tax

By Michelle V. Remo

A GROUP of tobacco farmers has sought the scrapping of a revenue regulation that increases the taxes on new cigarette brands for four of leaving the bulk of their leaves.

In a motion filed with the Supreme Trial Court, the Philippine Association of Tobacco-based Cooperatives Inc. (Patoc) said it was supporting La Suerte Cigar and Cigarette Factory in questioning the legality of the Revenue Regulation No. 12-2000.

The regulation increases the taxes on new cigarette brands by 400 percent.

La Suerte, maker of new cigarette brands Mevaplus and Astro, recently asked the court to issue an injunction barring the implementation of RR No. 12-2000. It claimed the new regulation was unconstitutional because it singled out new cigarette brands in increasing the taxes, leaving old brands to enjoy the previous rates. This, it claimed, constitutes unfair playing field.

New cigarette brands are those introduced in the market after the revised National Internal Revenue Code took effect in October 1997.

"The revenue regulation is unconstitutional because it violates the rule that taxation should be uniform and equitable," said Patoc in its motion, citing Article VI of the 1987 Constitution.

The group said the implementation of the revenue regulation was seen to gravely affect its about 45,000 farmer members and their families because La Suerte was their biggest buyer of tobacco.

Patoc said that for cropping season 2002-2003, La Suerte bought 15 million kilos of Virginia and Burley tobaccos from the farmers in Northern Luzon.

It said that a significant reduction in the demand for tobacco would result in a sudden drop in its prices and thus result in huge losses for the farmers.

La Suerte earlier said it was buying almost 50 percent of the tobacco production of the farmers in Northern Luzon.

La Suerte had already stopped the production of its Astro and Mevaplus brands, whose taxes were increased by 400 percent after the issuance of RR No. 12-2000.

La Suerte said the resulting increase in prices made Astro and Mevaplus uncompetitive.

The higher tax rate of P5.60 per pack—which is much more than the previous rate of P1.12 per pack—increased the prices of Astro and Mevaplus to about P32, or higher than the P7 to P8 of their counterpart brands.

Chronic fatigue syndrome hits government

ALL shopping centers look alike to me. When you've seen one, you've seen a mall.

I have decided to write future articles in Filipino. This is as far as I have got. ENGLISH SESSION: ANALA LANG IS GOING DOWN. FILIPINO VERSION: ALI BABA.

MADUMBELL grace before meals:
WE LOVE OUR BREAD,
WE LOVE OUR MEATTTTS,
BUT MOST OF ALL,
WE LOVE EACH OTHER.
I think first is beautiful.

Seen on TV. Sinatra, "Every time I sneeze, I have an orgasm." Interviewer, "What are you taking for it?" Starlet, "Pepper."

Next stop: Heaven. Turkey Jones just ate and ate to the Istanbul'd market.

As I was not feeling well I went to the doctor. He said, "When you wake up in the morning, take a red pill with a large glass of water. At lunch, take a blue pill with a larger glass of water. Before sleeping, take a green pill with a large glass of water."

Alarmed, I said, "What's wrong with me?" The doctor replied, "You are not drinking enough water."

A couple in a home for the aged decided they would try to make love even though they were over 80.

"I must tell you," said the woman, "I have senile angina." "I should hope so," said the man, "the rest of you is pretty repulsive."

A woman was having an affair with her doctor for the past two months. "I think we should break it off," said the doctor. "You have found another gynecologist?" "No, there's never been a woman's curiosity satisfied more quickly."

"That may be," said the dentist, "but we are down to your last tooth."

I went to my favorite bookstore and promptly displayed was THE ENCHIRIDION OF LOZADA. I peeped at a few pages and blushed. Nothing like I have ever written even remotely compares with it. How on earth did it ever get published?

* * *

FINANCE Secretary Camacho resigned suddenly, citing emotional exhaustion, and Bureau of Treasury fellows will be hearing on Jan. 21, 2004—due to budgetary constraints—never to reckoned that government officials worked themselves so hard for a miserable P50,000 a month.

I guess that when I reach their age, I will have to slow down too. Both were highly organized here and overseas, so their departure

Mr. Bearbull

Ron Nathan

is unsettling, particularly six months before the election.

The obvious conclusion is that they left in order to avoid a conflict in the months ahead regarding the financial discipline necessary to contain the budget deficit.

After months of prevaricating, PAGbas at last announced his intention of running for President. The Makati Business Club and GMA were not pleased, neither were foreign investors who fear a repeat of the Estrada debacle.

The Peso tumbled 25 points and the peso dipped to a record low against a very weak dollar. Next day, the index fell another 7 points, but the peso recovered a little ground. It is not my job to comment on the merits of the various candidates. I leave that to the political analysts. I intend to write about events only insofar as they relate to the stock market.

Although the index fell on Thursday and Friday, net turnover, excluding crum rules was fairly modest so there was no panic selling either by foreign brokers or by local investors.

Foreign brokers did most of their selling close to four weeks ago, when the degree of risk was 19 and the Phisix (now) than 800 points higher than it is now.

A rally started last week but was aborted by the announcements of FPJ and Mr. Camacho. The risk factor today is 22, on Friday it was 12, so it is not the time to dump good stocks.

There has been selective foreign selling of ALI and SMPH, both of which have recorded substantial falls. There has also been profit-taking on TEL and GLOBE, hardly surprising as they have had very big gains this year.

BPI has been buying PETRON heavily and it has risen from P2.82 to P2.18 since I wrote about it last week. MEBL is paying a 13-centavo/ share tax increase and the shares rallied as this will help their viability.

The Energy Regulatory Commission took the view that curtailment of future power shortages should be the prime consideration and the temporary rate increase would allow them to start 42 expensive projects to improve services.

On the macroeconomic front, the 3rd quarter results were above expectations with GDP better than expected at 4.4 percent. Agriculture showed a rise of 5.5 percent, against an expected 4.2 percent, due to outstanding growth of palay, fishery and forestry, supported by favorable weather conditions and the government.

The service industry also grew at a faster pace of 5.1 percent due to a stronger than expected rebound of government services. Industry grew at 2.3 percent, within expectations and there was strong growth in investment coming from durable equipment (13.8 percent).

This will eventually increase the competitiveness and productivity of a number of industries and thus enhance their export performance. The 4th quarter GDP is expected to show close to 5.0 percent—0 percent as far as agricultural weather is unlikely to continue, but GDP for the year should at least hit 4.2 percent, which is the lower end of the government's target.

Manufacturing contributed 4.4 percent growth against 2.7 percent last year, and personal consumer spending continues to rise, as the outlook for the 2004 remains favorable.

Over the next few months, my articles will tend to be shorter unless I include my observations in Thailand, which the editor continues to censor. This is not because I am fed up writing, it is due to the fact that the dividend season has ended and there will not be any more company announcements for approximately 3 months.

In any event, you can get a great deal of information from the internet.

We are probably in for a quiet period while the opposition party chooses its official candidate. If PGI, the market will go home; if Bernie Lacson, it will breathe a sigh of relief. The foreign and local institutions will start their window dressing during the last few days of the year on the stocks that they own.

The prime candidates in TEL, but ENEX, MEGR, SMPH, PCOR, SMCB and ALI may also be in their portfolios. nathan@pacific.net.com

HK economy grew in Nov.

HONG KONG—Strong demand from overseas buyers in the US and China helped fuel Hong Kong's economy for the sixth straight month in November although the growth was slower than the previous month, the latest Purchasing Manager's Index (PMI) survey showed.

The index dipped to 56.3 in November but it is "broadly consistent" with October's three-and-a-half year peak at 56.5, the survey said, it reading of 50 or above indicates economic expansion.

The Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply, a joint compiler of the index, said new businesses drove growth in November and the 300 companies it surveyed weekly linked improved volume of new businesses to stronger client confidence.

"Mixed with the recent buying spree reported in our monthly members, particularly United States and mainland China, our panelists are expanding their capacity to meet the anticipated growth," Paul Ng, deputy chair of the institute, said in a statement.

The monthly index fell to its lowest this year in April when the deadly SARS virus struck. It rebounded to above 50 in June when the outbreak ended and had since steadily since then until November. Reuters

Euro hits new high, Asian stocks steady

SINGAPORE—The euro hit a new record high against the dollar and two-month highs against the yen on Monday as political and economic fears gripped the US currency, but Asian stocks gained as exporters geared up before a pro-Christmas shopping rush.

The euro stretched to a new high of $1.2040, up half a cent from late Friday trades, before retreating to $1.2020.

The single currency which traded at $1.1740 when it was launched in January 1999, has recovered from a record low of around $0.8225 set in October 2000.

Japanese stocks fell and bonds fell in early trade but quickly recovered as investors digested the government's surprise nationalization of insolvent Ashikaga Bank, the new symbol of Ashikaga Financial Group.

The Nikkei average was up 0.77 percent, recovering from a 1.17 percent drop to finish the morning at 10,177.84. Banks fell 1.27 percent.

To calm market nerves, the Bank of Japan poured additional funds into the money market, which supported the Aibi market.

An MSCI index of Asian stock markets excluding Japan gained 0.25 percent. South Korea's KOSPI jumped 1.26 percent on news that the government would auction its 9.1 percent stake in the country's biggest bank, Kookmin Bank.

Australia's bourse saw the cautious bank expectations the second bank would raise rates this week was the benchmark S&P/ASX 200 index down 0.6 to 4,016.

Boeing US economic figures that helped propel stocks higher last week were expected to report a modest fall in the week to come ahead of the week to November jobs and manufacturing and services sector data.

US holiday weekend shopping figures will also be watched, as investors search for evidence consumers are spending heavily and helping cushion the economic recovery.

"The market has developed an upward bias, and I think it will continue into next week," said Stanley Nabi, managing director at Credit Suisse Asset Management in the United States.

The day after Thanksgiving—known as Black Friday because is many markets the day when retailers go out of the red—is the traditional start to the holiday shopping season, which generates as much as 40 percent of annual revenues for toy stores and apparel chains.

Asian exporters were also looking for evidence of a holiday boost in US sales. Taiwan's TSMC was the biggest winner with a 1.29 percent bumb-led gain. Singapore's Stexin Times Index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index also rose.

Gold opened slightly higher in Asia in line with the euro's rise and on renewed buying interest from Japanese investors. Reuters

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GLOBE shareholder of **Liberty Telecoms Holdings Inc.** were approved Monday, Pedro Sat, Rose Jose Domingo, Jose Luis Morales, Alexander Campos, Raymond John Moreno and Noel Dela Merced.

SMGP no quorum could be obtained in November; **CYBER Bay Corp.**'s annual shareholders' meeting was postponed until further notice.

LEISURE and Resorts World Corp. will decrease its authorized capital stock from P2.5 billion to P1.8 billion to eliminate its deficit of over P457 million. Also, the company changed the date of its annual stockholders' meeting from third Tuesday of April to last week of June.

Matsushita Electric Philippines Corp.'s Panasonic Industrial Sales Philippines division will operate only until March 31, 2004 after the company's decision not to sell and distribute Panasonic industrial products in the country. *Compiled by Marina O. Dueñas, PDI Research*

Microsoft goal: Computer in every car

REDMOND, Washington—For Microsoft set out to put a computer in every home, the software giant now hopes to put one in every vehicle, too.

"We'd like to have one of our operating systems in every car on Earth," said Dick Hume, vice president of Microsoft's automotive business unit. "It's a lofty goal."

Cars with the Microsoft software will speak up when it's time for an oil change. They'll warn drivers about wrecks on the road ahead and route alternate routes. They'll pay highway tolls automatically. The software may one day their brakes will upgrade itself wirelessly.

The Microsoft platform already is in 20 different car models, including the BMW 7 series, Citroen, Daimler-Benz, Volvo, Hyundai, Mitsubishi, Subaru and Toyota Motor.

Hume made his remarks last week at a technology, tells and transportation conference held at Microsoft and sponsored by the Discovery Institute's Cascadia Project.

Globally, there are 450 million cars, and 10 million new vehicles are produced every year. Hume said—comparable to the market for desktop computers.

Microprocessors already control major vehicle functions. And for years, Microsoft has been making inroads in automotive telematics, a combination of computers and telecommunications.

Hume said drivers spend millions of hours commuting and are distracted by stalled gadgets, including hand-held viewers that allow traffic reports from the state Department of Transportation.

Microsoft's "Xbox," which he said will be available in 12 to 36 months, can connect them all and make them hands-free.

Ford Motor has a processor, memory and a hard drive with no moving parts, said Dave Metzger, marketing manager for Microsoft's automotive unit.

At the conference, Hume showed on the screen instructions asking what gadgets Future cars should carry.

"I don't want Ford making PDAs, and I don't want Microsoft making cars," one man said.

But bringing the two together seems inevitable. AP

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 20[illegible]
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Fitness LIFESTYLE
Editor Chela Bautista-Formoso

When is the best time to exercise?

Part 2

EXERCISE physiologist Richard Cotton of ACE told CNN that afternoon sessions might be a good way to prevent injury and get maximum performance, but he said the most important thing is a consistent exercise regimen.

Exercise improves sleep by producing a rise in body temperature, followed by a drop a few hours later, which is what makes you sleepy

Studies have shown that morning exercisers are more likely to stick to their exercise programs than people who exercise in the afternoon or evening. This is probably because as the day goes on, it is too easy to start making excuses why you can't exercise—your last meeting ran overtime, you feel too tired after a long day in the office, there is too much traffic, etc.

Other health experts interviewed by CNN said if people preferred to exercise in the morning, they just needed to spend a few minutes warming up to prevent injury.

WELL AND GOOD

Trixie Zuasola

Can morning exercise make you sick?

Dr. Lloyd Bentsen of Brunel University, London, caused a bit of controversy in the athletic world when he suggested morning exercise could make athletes more prone to infection.

Bentsen studied 114 professional swimmers and he found the cause hormone cortisol was at its highest level in the morning while the chemical IgA was at its lowest.

Cortisol weakens the immune system while IgA helps to destroy infections in the air, so Bentsen was worried that people could be at a higher risk of infection if they exercised in the morning. However other experts disagree.

Dr. Brian English, chief medical officer of UK Athletics, told BBC News, "Athletes exercise when they feel their bodies are ready. And these are professional athletes, they know their bodies extremely well. They will know when their mental and physical circadian rhythms are at their highest."

English also said average persons could choose whatever time they wanted to exercise. "People tend to find their own time for exercising, when they feel best," he explained.

BBC also spoke to Darrel Sparkes of the Amateur Swimming Association who said, "We shouldn't leap to conclusions, it is a very small group that it has been looked at. Our opinion is you do your exercise when you feel comfortable. Professional swimmers train in the morning as they have a big volume to get through. And any exercise is better than none."

Greater risk of heart attacks in the morning?

Although it is true that there is an increased incidence of heart attacks during the hours of 6 a.m. to noon, this should not discourage morning exercisers.

Morning exercise does not increase the risk of heart attack in the morning, according to Dr. Paul Thompson, M.D., director of preventive cardiology at Miriam Hospital in Rhode Island. In his study of 11,000 joggers, Thompson found only one death from cardiac arrest per year.

If you have a history of heart disease or you have several risk factors, talk to your cardiologist if it is appropriate for you to exercise early in the morning.

Sleep problems and exercise timing

Studies have shown that exercise can help people who have sleep problems. But there have been conflicting results as to whether morning or afternoon exercise is better.

Dr. Shelley Tworoger of the Fred Hutchison Cancer Research Center in Seattle found that postmenopausal women between the ages of 50 and 75 years old did better with aerobic exercise in 9:30 a.m. compared to 4 p.m.

Study participants who did a stretching exercise had fewer sleep improvements than the aerobic exercise group, but it did not matter whether they did their workout in the morning or evening.

Meanwhile, the Stanford University School of Medicine found that sedentary insomniacs between the ages of 55 and 75 experienced improvements in sleep by doing aerobic exercise in the afternoon. They were able to increase their sleep time by one hour and they reduced

Reconstructing beauty

Clinique Internationale d'Esthetique in Alabang offers the latest 'enhancement' procedures by French cosmetic surgeon Pierre Cléro

Text by Alex Y. Vergara
Photos by Dino Nuñez

SERENITY away from the madding crowd

EAST meets West in the clinic's reception area.

DR. Pierre Cléro

Nature's 'medicine cabinet' provides healthful products

By Belle V. Rosales

NUTRILITE's children's Chewable Multivitamin/Multimineral with Acerola C

Why some people commit suicide

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime S. Licauco

FOUR years ago, Rose (not her real name), a young mother of a lovely two-month-old child, committed suicide by jumping from the top of a building in Makati City.

Both Rose's relatives and her husband, Benny, who was also a corporate partner like her, could not find any cogent reason why she would end her life. The couple had no serious problems with each other; they did not quarrel prior to the tragic incident; they were economically sufficient; the marriage was a happy one; there were no third party involved; her health was good.

Cases of suicide in the Philippines, especially among the young, are increasing. Some of the known causes are drugs, poverty, severe depression and heartbreak, parental quarrels, jealousy, shame or loss of face, terminal illness, insanity.

But in the case of Rose, none of these causes exists.

In Western Europe, where the highest rate of suicide has been reported, poverty is never a reason. No one is really that poor out there. The most notorious reason is anger, an indefinable feeling of unsatisfactoriness and spitefulness of emptiness amid material wealth and success. Neither does this apply to Rose.

What happens to the spirits of those who commit suicide? For some clairvoyants, they remain numb and confused on the other side. They cannot understand why they are still alive when they have already committed suicide.

There was this case of a young man who committed suicide by slashing his wrist with a sharp knife. A clairvoyant says what he did. His spirit kept on slashing his wrist, although his physical body was already dead. He could not understand why he wouldn't die. He continued to study his phantom arms thinking he was still in the flesh.

Such a spirit will remain confounded until he begins to realize he is already dead and separated. And there are dead relatives and spirit guides who come to help such confused souls.

The case of Rose was a big puzzle not only to her husband and to the rest of her relatives because, as pointed out earlier, they would find no justification in rational explanation why she would choose to end her eminently happy and successful life.

The husband was beginning to blame himself for the suicide of his wife, although he obviously had nothing to do with it.

Negative spirit

When I was asked last week for my opinion about the case of Rose, it immediately occurred to me that the cause of her suicide could be a negative spirit. She must have been possessed by an evil spirit and, while inside her brain, made her jump to her death.

For no one in her sane mind would do a thing like that. The very thought of the physical pain the person would experience upon landing on the ground should be enough for any normal person to be discouraged from proceeding with the act.

So, I thought only somebody not in full possession of his or her faculties could commit suicide in that manner. The fact that she just gave birth to a lovely and healthy child a couple of months back added further proof to the theory that she was not mentally stable when she jumped to her death.

So, we decided to resume an entity from the upper fifth dimension, who was being channeled by a lady physician through automatic writing, for an explanation. The answer this highly evolved entity gave was enlightening and very revealing.

"This suicide was caused by an external force, to be a spirit," said the entity. "There was also a deep desire by Rose to end her life. This is the reason for the attraction of the black spirit in the form of a mental nagging thought to disrupt the flow of goodness in her life.

"Rose was very disconcerted with the way her life turned out to be, though her physical from did not show it. Her life karmic opportunities contributed a lot. For jumping, her suicide could not have been prevented by her husband."

The spirit of Rose came in at this point and sanctioned the automatic writing, this explained that the negative spirit was controlling her. She could not do anything. She asked me if our compassion to pray for her and to tell her husband she was still at a loss for losing committed suicide.

Address letters to this column to 888 Prime Plaza I, 106 Legaspi St., Dasmariñas, Makati City. Tel. nos.: 8405545 or 4026000; or e-mail jlicauco@pldt.netmail.com.ph. Visit my website at http://licauco.tripod.com. Listen to my shows radio program every Sunday, 6-8 p.m.

Easing a patient's family's worries

CALLED Intensive Care Unit (ICU) or Critical Care Unit (CCU), patients in this specialized section of a hospital need closer monitoring, and are sometimes in shock or near death. The unit, by providing special care to a patient, also offers physical and emotional relief to family members who can maximize their loved one in its competent hands.

At the St. Luke's Medical Center-Bonifacio CCU, the ratio is one patient to one nurse.

Dr. Herbert Uy, a hobbyist pharmacist, said taking care of sick kids was a big challenge. Although its bed uses fell to be more utilized than adults' against illnesses and able to regain normalcy much more quickly, he stressed the need to have sick children attended to as soon as problems arose.

Causing the gastrointestinal outbreak, for instance, the most important intervention was to try to restore the level of salt in a patient's body.

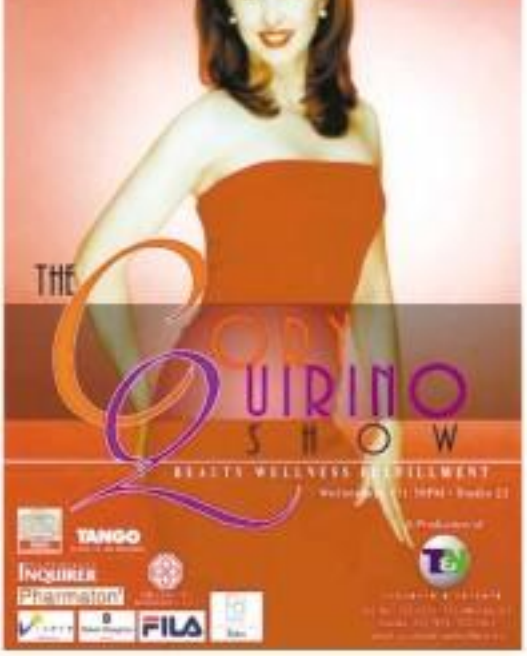
Gastroenteritis kills because of dehydration or loss of vital body fluids. Once body salts become abnormally low, hypovolemic or intake of replacement fluids should immediately be effected. So when a kid with gastroenteritis is brought to the CCU, the first thing the medical team does is to administer intravenous fluids.

Other cases brought to the Pediatric CCU, aside from those coming from the emergency room or recuperating from surgery, are kids with blood pressure problems, medically referred to as having hypertension or hypotension. Kids are also susceptible to low blood pressure or vasomotor shock. Hypotension due to certain conditions like kidney problems, vomiting from accident surgery.

A sharp drop in a child's platelet count, as in the case of dengue patients, will also lead him to the CCU.

Aside from urged parents to bring sick kids to the nearest hospital right away since they are the following: any form of bleeding, not eating anymore and vomiting of digested blood. They should not wait for the child to develop shock when they become restless, drowsy and are not responsive anymore.

Call 7230101 local 2220.



Some common illnesses may be alleviated through high-nutritional diets and herbal therapies

Treat your health problems the natural way

THERE are several ways to treat a health condition. Choices can range from traditional herbal ways to western medicine.

But let's take a look at some common health problems that may be alleviated the natural way through high-nutritional diet and herbal therapies. However, do take note that any information contained here is not meant to substitute for the advice of your doctor.

Anemia

This illness results from an abnormally low number of red blood cells and a reduction in hemoglobin.

Causes. Iron deficiency, ulcers, parasites, internal bleeding, frequent blood donations, cancer, deficiency of vitamin B6, B12, folic acid and oxygen, excessive use of antibiotics

Foods that can help. Fresh fruits, green leafy vegetables, raisins, liver, soy milk, nuts, eggs, meat, poultry

Bodywork. Shiatsu, yoga

Aromatherapy. Rosemary, chamomile, marjoram oil

Asthma

Asthma is a condition that causes spasms in the bronchial passage, restricting the flow of air.

Causes. Allergies (food, tobacco dust, pollen, chemicals, viral infection, physical exercise)

Foods. Fresh fruits and veggies (pineapple, ginger, chili, turmeric, legumes, water, guava, Chinese, orange, carrot, tomato), fatty fish, sardines

Bodywork. Massage, dejuvenate technique (to improve posture), tai chi, acupuncture

Aromatherapy. Eucalyptus, juniper, rosemary, peppermint oil (mixed in carrier oil and massage on chest)

Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

This results from the compression of a nerve as a result of repetitive motions of the fingers and wrist.

Foods. Supplements, soy, fresh fruits, fatty fish, nuts, ginger, turmeric

Bodywork. Acupuncture, qui gong, massage

Colds and flu

A viral infection of the upper and lower respiratory tract caused by one of around 200 identified viruses.

Foods. Fresh fruits, asparagus, ginger, chili, low-fat yogurt, garlic, basil, green onion, honey, carrot, tomato, spinach

Bodywork. Acupressure, reflexology, shiatsu

Aromatherapy. Tea tree and peppermint (for facial massage and inhalations), eucalyptus, lavender

Back pain

Men usually from lifting a heavy object, a sudden motion or a bad fall. Chronic back pain may be caused by viral infection, emotional problems, poor posture, weak muscles, pregnancy and congenital defects.

Foods. Fatty fish (salmon, tuna, mackerel, sardines), fresh fruits and veggies, nuts, extra virgin olive oil, ginger, cayenne

Bodywork. Massage, deejuvenate technique, shiatsu, reflexology

Aromatherapy. Sage, rosemary, lavender

Bruises

Bruises are caused by trauma to the skin as blood leaks out of the capillary walls under the skin. Apply a cold compress immediately. Add rosemary essence or Hesperal.

Foods. Fresh fruits, green veggies, legumes, pineapple, papaya (ripe), carrot, celery

Bodywork. Acupuncture

Constipation

This happens when too little fiber and fluids affect the elimination process of the body.

Foods. Whole grains, legumes, fruits and veggies, juices (apple, celery, prune, pear, tomato)

Bodywork. Regular brisk walking and exercise, massage, reflexology, yoga

Depression

The blues that don't seem to go away may be caused by hypothyroid, hypoglycemia, PMS (pre-menstrual syndrome), allergies (food, chemicals, pesticides), stress, emotional problems and viral coronary illness.

Foods. Whole organic foods, whole grains, cereals and pasta, seafood, lean fish, meat, ginger

Aromatherapy. Frankincense, lifelina, chamomile, lavender, orange, ylang ylang

Bodywork. Massage, shiatsu, reflexology, yoga, regular exercise

Diabetes

A condition where there is too much sugar in the blood and insufficient supply is absent or insufficient to control it.

Foods. Whole foods and grains, brown rice, barley, oats, legumes, peanuts, fresh lean meat, eggs, fresh fruits, veggies, cinnamon, cloves, turmeric, bay leaves, coriander, pinches of nutmeg

Aromatherapy. Camphor, juniper, lemon, eucalyptus (massage oil to be applied on the body for relief of pain and it, juniper (used with olive oil, massage on the spleen area)

Bodywork. Massage, reflexology

Headaches

Dull or sharp pain due to mental stress, dehydration, anemia or allergies.

Foods. Fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, grains, garlic

Heartburn

Acid reflux occurs when hydrochloric acid and pepsin from the stomach seep into the esophagus caused by, among others, eating too fast or too much, eating the wrong food and consuming cholesterol and fatty foods. And too much alcohol.

Foods. Fresh fruits/veggies, ginger, garlic, parsley, juices (carrot, celery)

Bodywork. Massage, best to eat three hours before going to bed. Eat on the left side to ease symptoms. Do not eat the esophagus raises the stomach on the right side. Set wine coasters applied on the tummy area, and rub with essential oils.

Massaging your body and all its sides and points is easier if you'll simply listen. Symptoms that may accompany illnesses can be signals that should not be ignored.

Also, sometimes, when determines the body's ability to heal is a person's state of calm. So, learn to take more deep breaths. Have a more positive outlook in life and in ways others. "All is well with me!"

Love and light!

Reference: "The Nutrition Almanac" by Lavon J. Dunne

Comments: You're Got The Power," a day of fun, fitness and empowerment, will be held on Jan. 4 at the new Old Megamall's Adventure's Inn. Call 911-5262.

Total Wellness Workshop by Sheila Malone will be held Jan. 3, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Studio Rock, with venue. Call 8988881 local 8711.

Beauty, Wellness and Fulfillment will be discussed on the Gary Quinto show, Saturdays, 11:30 p.m., Studio 23 beginning Dec. 7.

INSIDE OUT

Gwy Quevedo

When is the best time to exercise?

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Standing leg extension on stability ball

Fitness LIFESTYLE

RACER back wear and drawstring pants

PANELLED tee and striped track pants

Yoga wear that feels like heaven

MIND and fitness hosts two of the country's leading yogi and their respective views from the yoga mats.

RJ TU: Ask today and health and fitness buff Chinggay Andrada is in tune with her mind, body and soul. Yoga is Andrada's formula of coiled allow a physically vigorous week. "I currently teach punching aerobics five times a week, not to mention my work in the radio station. Yoga helps me relax after crushing 12 work and hearing," she says.

Aside from helping her balance these vigorous jobs, Andrada reveals that yoga has helped her become more physically flexible and emotionally sound.

Joel an ordeal in Bonni Cruz, a 9-5 head executive at a telecom company. From telephone talk, Cruz switches to the peaceful swings of her "lotus-ga" yoga positions. That easy-to-slide her practically-bared silhouette, but she believes there's more to yoga.

"What I've realized is yoga is more spiritual to master. The physical benefit derived from regular practice is just icing on the cake. Yoga has enabled me to quiet my mind and lead a stress-free life," Cruz says.

One sure sweat-the inner glow is both women, brought about by a totally calm well-being.

Another reason to make Andrada and Cruz smile is the new Marks and Spencer's yoga and fitness line, 'Vive Prana'—a new line of yoga wear that feels like heaven above anywhere.

"I love the feel of it and I greatly appreciate how it moves with my body. It allows my skin to breathe and the styles fit any body so well," says Andrada.

"The fit-Fit line is ideal since it manages to retain a lot of perspiration it regarded as a drawing person to rid the body of toxins. The 150-Fit dries fast, and it gives a comfortable feeling especially at the end of every session. during Savasana (corpse pose), when we lie still on our mats. Before I would end up feeling cold and sticky with sweat," Cruz says.

MODELS at the launch of Palmolive Aromatherapy's refreshing scents and colors.

PROGRAM host Hana Hemmings interviews Myrna Reagan, personal care products director, and Jenny Catching, senior manager for new product development, both of Colgate-Palmolive Phils.

Magic formula for the stressed-out; photographer takes different artistic path

GUESTS get a whiff of the soothing scents of Palmolive Aromatherapy—a blend of lavender, lemongrass, honey, patchouli and ylang-ylang for de-stress and green tea, grapefruits, honey, mandarin and ginger for energize.

YOUNG and handsome Jose Manuel Estrada, marketing director of Colgate-Palmolive Phils.

MYRNA Reagan, personal care products director of Colgate-Palmolive Phils.

TOMMY Sycoson, Luis de Siria, Maggie Go, Elsa Isaac, Rich owner Gary Goh and Dream Bar's Ita Feliciano

CANDID camera! Funny faces were the Dos &C

GORGEOUS! Isabelle Andres Prunier and Nicolas Arra

EAST meets west. Akiniok's cosplay Christine Sze Diego with her man, Van Damme look-alike Marlon Bronnenhuis

ARTISTS from two worlds. Baron Fabio Concepcion with her mentor Sheila Reyes, and samples of their stunning works of art

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maverick Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen on Kodak Max

to those who wondered what was going on, my answer was, "Why not?" As I have been doing most of the production design in my clients, the logical next step would be to transition this sensibility into tangible, longer lasting products. thus furniture design was a natural progression. Most of the pieces in exhibit have come up in the moments that my mind was working overtime during a client.

"The furniture should not really be taken in a purely functional manner, but should be seen as fun, related conversational pieces that will make people do a double take as different functions reveal themselves to the users and viewers."

Browsing around that big warehouse, we both looked at and tried sitting on some of the chairs, which looked kinda hard on the butt but surprisingly were super comfortable. But the exhibition isn't just there to show the furniture was so modern the only time you're really comfortable was when you sat on the floor.

The show had eight furniture pieces and 13 large-scale photographs printed on watercolor paper, palangpas, softening the photographs into something similar to a less mechanical medium like sketching and print making. All the furniture pieces were inspired by his youngest twin sons, Yugalle Rhoda, "as well as videos like Madonna's "Like a Virgin." No surveillance, there were a couple that were definitely conversation pieces— most, like chaise pieces of art, more than just practical.

As we said our "congrats" and "bye" to the man of the hour, frustrated Sean sidled over. "Hey Maestro, I hope you had as much fun here as I had in creating these pieces." We did, palangpas.

Of children and horses

Young, talented mother of three daughters and pretty as a picture Karen Subio Concepcion is a 1991 Fine Arts graduate of the University of the Philippines, major in Painting.

After college, Karen got involved in the advertising world, molding, like coin of young ambitious new graduates, to become a stable being. For three years, Karen was fortunate to work as a visualizer and creative art director for Basic Point, Gano and Belding, now known as Basic Advertising. Then she got married and started having her blessings.

In 1997, Karen met Sheilla Rojas when she enrolled in the latter's class. "Sheila brought me back to a world I was very familiar with, painting. I always took my painting half-seriously and never really imagined myself as a serious painter. With every session, Sheila reminded me of the fun and fulfillment that painting gave and this also gave me a deeper understanding of myself as an artist because she believed in me and my work." The rest is history.

Her first show at the Ayala Museum in 2001 titled "Chaos" was a sell-out! Now, in her latest exhibit titled, "Two Worlds," Karen Subio-Concepcion will be showing her works on her beloved themes—horses, children and flowers. But is she now trying a new theme, which has attracted her attention? Ah.

Karen is an avid equestrienne and actively competes in Horse Jumping. Since 1997, she has had three one-woman shows and has joined several group shows as well. Sheilla Rojas, her mentor, will be showing her favorite subject , the stark landscape. She welcomes to encourage Karen to paint more and more.

The star of a kind exhibit, "Two Worlds," opened Nov. 6 at Le Bastille. The Fort, and is ongoing until Dec. 6.

Check it out, palangpas. You'll agree that "Two Worlds" is the meeting of minds of two painters, horses and birds, each with her own unique world. They put these worlds together to come up with this show, which is rich with life and experience.

From photos to furniture

When you think of or hear the name Raymund Isaac, what comes to mind? Photographs, scenic nudes or nudes in nature, or moods, and a unique style of photographs that taken may heard that Raymund was having a furniture exhibit. I thought, wow, this I gotta see. And see it did, with a complete conception of the creativity of this talented person. I asked him, "How did you get into this?"

"When people looked at my exhibit, the general reaction was: 'Huh? A furniture designer designing furniture?' Well,

Fragrant as flowers, smooth as silk

By Allison W. Lopez

WHEN it comes to pampering, it's not just the beauty scene that counts. It's the whole idea of bathing luxuriously and smelling great from head to toe so you begin the day with an invigorating feeling and end it in a relaxed state of mind.

With this in mind, Colgate-Palmolive has created a new line of shampoo, shower gel and talc powder products called Aromatherapy.

Infused with essential oils to rejuvenate the body inside and out, these products use nature's ingredients to awaken the senses.

Aromatherapy, the ancient art of using natural oils extracted from aromatic plants to enhance one's health and beauty, can now be easily enjoyed with the new beauty line.

"We created these products to give the mass market the chance to enjoy aromatherapy," says Myrtle Baugat, marketing director for personal care products.

Beauty products that tout aromatherapy benefits have long been a staple in most shelves, but Colgate-Palmolive's aromatherapy line is specifically geared to meet ordinary working women who go for practical, inexpensive solutions to their beauty requirements.

With the Philippine hair care market a whopping P3.6B-million business, it's no wonder that the company decided to introduce its first aromatherapy shampoo line here. The product is also available in sachets.

The shampoo makes a great first impression with a relaxing fragrance—plus it also doubles as a conditioner.

"There are two variants—the citrusy Energy, a blend of green tea, grapefruit and honey; and the soothing Anti-Stress, which has lavender, lemongrass and honey.

Energy shampoo leaves smell is perfect to start the day with, as it gives long and dull hair greater body and shine.

The Anti-Stress variant, on the other hand, has a calming scent and a rich formula that removes moisture, softness and shine to dry hair.

Silky feel

The shower gel, which Baugat says was a hit in the US and will be available in the Philippines for the first time, also comes in the same two variants but with differ-

THE ANTI-STRESS line has the soothing scent of lavender in its shampoo, shower gel and talc powder.

ent blends.

Will softener Hi-Quinn learn that soap bars for shower gels? Baugat answers in the affirmative. A market test proved that first-time shower gel users found the silky after-bath feel mesmerizing.

"Soaps make the skin feel right. The body wash line is really for convenience," she says.

Indeed, while one bottle of shower gel may cost around P70, which is three times the price of an ordinary body soap, it can also last for several uses as three words and remove the need for applying skin lotion after bathing.

The talc powders, on the other hand, first made its mark in Thailand, where Baugat says the brand member made the powder a must-have among Thais.

Swollen to say, having the same climate as Thailand made the Philippines the natural next destination of the product.

The talc powders come in two variants—the citrusy Energy, a blend of green tea, grapefruit and honey; and the soothing Anti-Stress, which has lavender, lemongrass and honey.

Energy shampoo leaves smell is perfect to start the day with, as it gives long and dull hair greater body and shine.

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ENERGY shower gel and talc powder

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